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THE

JAN. 14, 2008

NEW YORKER



Sempé.

**I don't cook. So I made my eat-in kitchen
a fabulous walk-in closet.**



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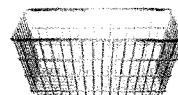
Shelves & boxes

Thinking outside the box

My name is Grace and I live in a small apartment in a big city. And since I enjoy a day of shopping far more than, say, cooking, I decided to do a bit of home remodeling.



So with my Citi card in hand, I set out to get some closet organizers.



I bought a shoe rack for the oven, sweater boxes

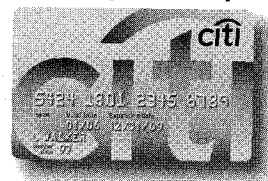


for the lower cupboards and some 12-inch baskets for handbags



up above. I saved room for plates, glasses and silverware. And one large drawer stuffed with take-out menus. Whatever your story is, your Citi card can help you write it.

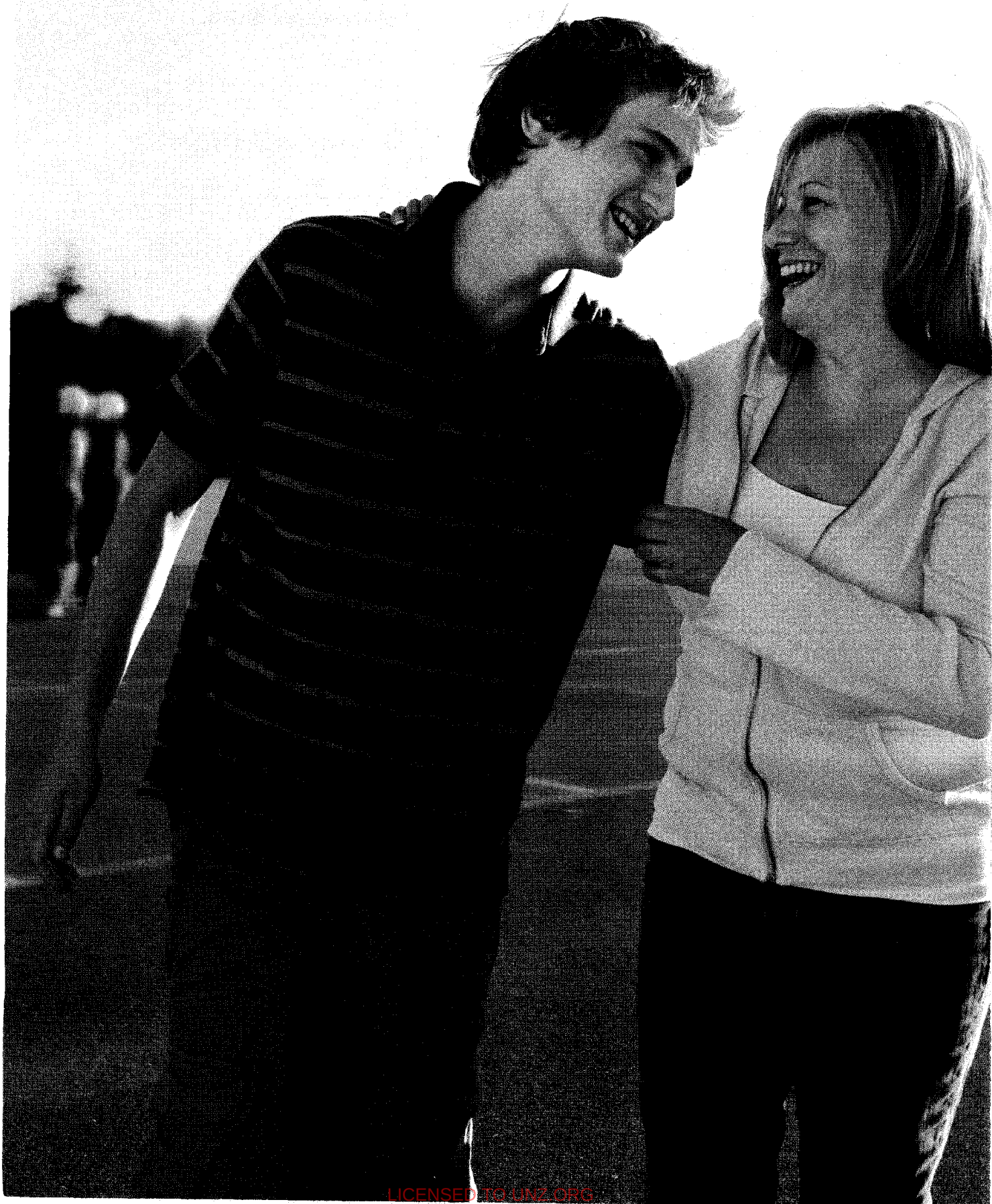
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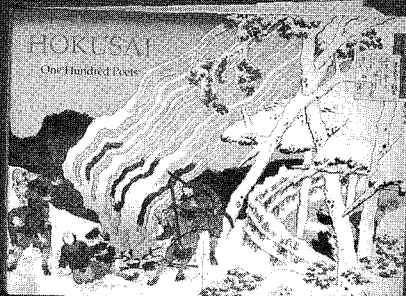
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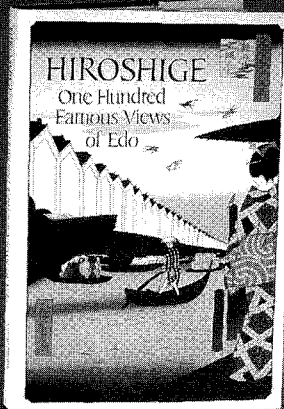
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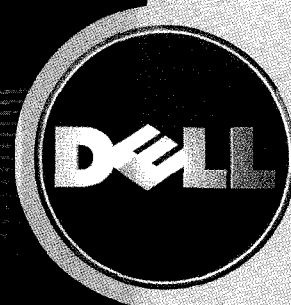
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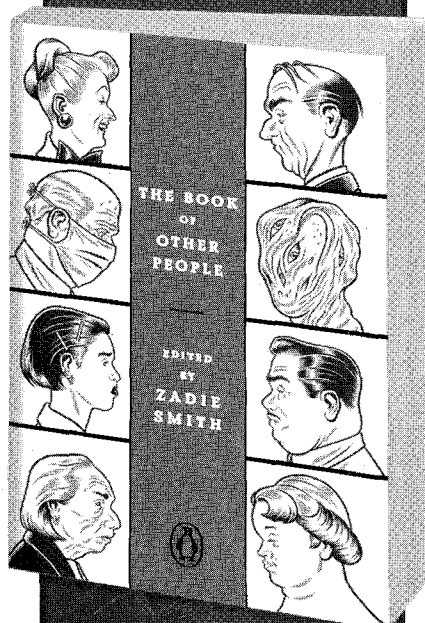
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CONTRIBUTORS

Ken Auletta ("The Search Party," p. 30) is working on a book about the future of media. His books include "Backstory: Inside the Business of News" and "The Highwaymen."

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Andy Borowitz (Shouts & Murmurs, p. 38) writes the online column The Borowitz Report.

John Seabrook ("American Scrap," p. 46) is a staff writer. "The Flash of Genius," his January, 1993, piece about Bob Kearns, the inventor of the intermittent windshield wiper, is being made into a movie that is due out this year.

Steve Brodner (Sketchbook, p. 53) is an illustrator. His series of films "The Naked Campaign" can be seen at newyorker.com.

Michael Dickman (Poem, p. 56) has published poems in *Field*, *Tin House*, *Narrative*, and *Fence*.

Dana Goodyear ("Château Scientology," p. 40) is a staff writer and the author of the blog Postcard from Los Angeles, at newyorker.com. Her book of poems, "Honey and Junk," is out in paperback.

E. L. Doctorow (Fiction, p. 60) has published eleven novels, including "The March," which won the 2006 PEN/Faulkner award and the National Book Critics Circle Award.

David Denby (A Critic at Large, p. 76) is the author of "Great Books" and "American Sucker."

Marie Howe (Poem, p. 34) has published two books of poems, "The Good Thief" and "What the Living Do." Her third collection, "The Kingdom of Ordinary Time," is due out in March.

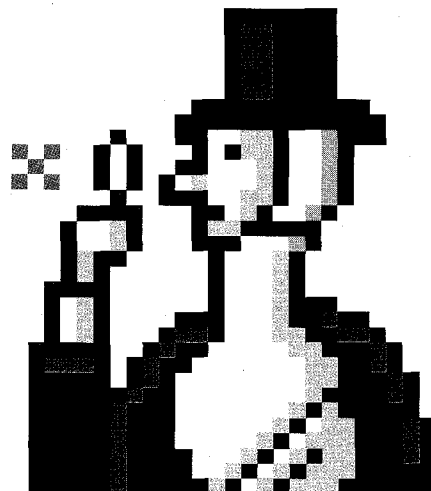
Sasha Frere-Jones (Pop Music, p. 84) writes a regular popular-music column for the magazine.

Anthony Lane (The Current Cinema, p. 86) is a staff writer. "Nobody's Perfect" is a collection of his *New Yorker* reviews and profiles.

J. J. Sempé (Cover) published "A Little Bit of Paris" last year. His art work has appeared in the magazine since 1998.

THIS WEEK ON NEWYORKER.COM

Hendrik Hertzberg blogs from New Hampshire, and chats about the primaries with Ryan Lizza and Dorothy Wickenden. / Campaign videos featuring Steve Brodner. / E. L. Doctorow reads a John O'Hara story. / David Denby talks about the two movie masterpieces of 2007. / Dana Goodyear on Scientologist-watching in L.A., plus blogs by George Packer, Sasha Frere-Jones, and Hilton Als. / From the archives: Michael Specter on Google and Lillian Ross on Otto Preminger. / The Eustace Tilley contest: Draw your own version. / Animated cartoons, the caption contest, and a list of *New Yorker* events.



THE MAIL

IN THE ORIGINAL

The illumination of the editorial relationship between Raymond Carver and Gordon Lish through the juxtaposition of the letters exchanged between author and editor and through the reproduction of Lish's edited ending of Carver's manuscript for his story "Beginners" alongside the original version of the story was fascinating ("Rough Crossings," December 24th & 31st). I was chilled by Lish's use of the word "expose" in his November 19, 1982, note to Carver, rationalizing his cuts and changes to Carver's original work: "to do less than this, would be, in my judgment, to expose you too greatly." "Beginners" contains unbearable tension and momentum; I found that Lish's edited version of the ending, with its allusion to various people's hearts beating, punctured the power of the original. Less is simply less.

*Ami Sands Brodoff
Montreal, Quebec*

Tess Gallagher hopes to publish Carver's stories in their "true, original" form. While certainly useful for Carver scholars, these earlier versions of his stories, if they are anything like "Beginners," may greatly disappoint readers like me who revere Carver's work in the form we've come to know it. Lish helped Carver shape the mediocre "Beginners" into the masterpiece "What We Talk About When We Talk About Love." Taut, poignant, yet unsentimental, the story makes a fine companion to Anton Chekhov's "About Love." Sometimes writers need editors to protect them from themselves. It seems that Carver needed Lish, and then needed to break away to forge expansive stories like "Errand" and "Blackbird Pie," which, alongside his earlier, minimalist pieces, reveal his continual growth as one of the great American practitioners of the short story.

*Keith Mikolavich
Oakland, Calif.*

Carver's letters are painful to read, as they demonstrate the addictive and dependent nature of his relationship with

Lish. Carver's struggle to recover his confidence, his voice, and his self-esteem is not a pretty one, and to expose him now as being so conflicted seems unnecessary and counterproductive. Also, more important, it is damaging to his reputation as a marvellous writer. Lish's dignified silence on the matter and his refusal to be drawn into the pointless and revisionist fray are testimony to his unapologetic stance and his good manners.

*Lily Tuck
New York City*

THE IMMIGRATION DEBATE

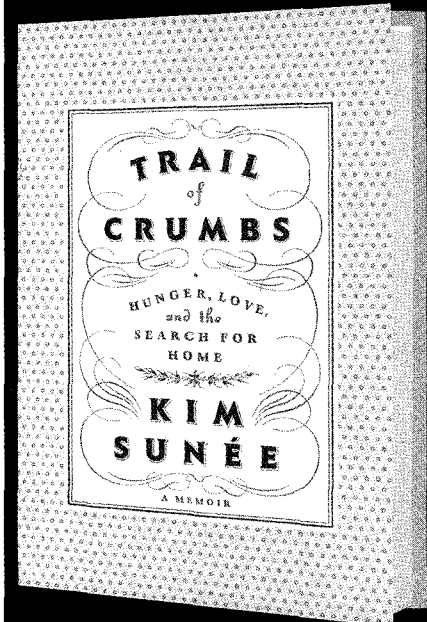
Ryan Lizza's article on the debate over immigration minimizes bipartisan support for restricting immigration ("Return of the Nativist," December 17th). While it is true that some immigration restrictionists, such as Representative J. D. Hayworth, Republican of Arizona, lost their congressional seats in the last election, a number of new Democrats, such as Heath Shuler, of North Carolina, were elected on platforms advocating limits on immigration. Shuler's SAVE Act, which would require all employers to use the electronic verification system to avoid hiring illegal aliens, has attracted forty-five Democratic co-sponsors and eighty-seven Republican co-sponsors, and the Democrats Mark Pryor and Mary Landrieu have introduced a companion bill in the Senate. Liberal Democrats like me support these measures because unrestricted immigration may take jobs from the most deprived Americans and reduce their wages—the National Academy of Sciences has found that immigration reduced the wages of U.S. high-school dropouts by twenty-seven per cent from 1979 to 1995.

*David C. Holzman
Lexington, Mass.*

Letters should be sent with the writer's name, address, and daytime phone number via e-mail to themail@newyorker.com. Letters may be edited for length and clarity, and may be published in any medium. All letters become the property of The New Yorker and will not be returned; we regret that owing to the volume of correspondence we cannot reply to every letter.

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"Kim Sunée tells us so much about the French that I never learned in 25 trips to Paris, but mostly about the terrors and pleasure of that infinite octopus, love. A fine book."

—Jim Harrison author of
Legends of the Fall and *Returning to Earth*

"KIM SUNÉE'S poetic memoir is like a piece of dark chocolate—bittersweet, satisfying, and finished all too soon."

—Laura Fraser, author of
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GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
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THIS WEEK

THE THEATRE NEW GUARD

"Under the Radar," the Public Theatre's annual showcase of emerging talent, begins this week. The twelve-day festival includes Young Jean Lee's "Church" and a dance piece by Nature Theatre of Oklahoma, "Poetics: A Ballet Brut." (See page 10.)

NIGHT LIFE BACK IN THE SADDLE

In 1985, Dan Stuart and Steve Wynn, a pair of bright lights in Los Angeles's neo-psychedelic

Paisley Underground scene, cut an album of off-the-cuff rock and freewheeling country music, "The Lost Weekend," that became a cult hit and presaged the current alternative-country movement. Stuart and Wynn, who call themselves Danny & Dusty, recently reunited, and they have a rare show at the Bowery Ballroom. (See page 12.)

ART AMERICAN IDYLL

The idiosyncratic American painter and installation artist Karen Kilimnik shifts her focus from people—Napoleon, Nureyev, Kate Moss—to landscape.

Among the works at Chelsea's 303 Gallery, where diamond dust on the walls stands in for stars, are a mermaid's-eye view of the ocean and a canvas titled "A Summer's Day, 1763." (See page 16.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC ANCIENT EVENINGS

The classical past will be powerfully evoked by two programs this week. Susan Graham sings Berlioz's "La Mort de Cléopâtre" with the New York Philharmonic, and the Greek Byzantine Choir performs Orthodox chants at the Metropolitan Museum of Art's Temple of Dendur. (See page 18.)

MOVIES BEST OF THE WEST

The recent DVD boxed set "Ford at Fox" presents twenty-four of John Ford's masterworks, but Moving Image offers the films in their ideal state: archival 35-mm. prints. The series includes four movies starring Henry Fonda—"Drums Along the Mohawk," "The Grapes of Wrath," "Young Mr. Lincoln," and "My Darling Clementine"—but begins this week with rare silents. (See page 22.)

The New York Rangers at their practice rink. Photograph by Landon Nordeman.

John Lee
Co-Publisher, *THEME Magazine*

Ask John Lee Why He Loves His BlackBerry

"My wife and I publish *THEME*, a magazine that showcases worldwide Asian culture. We have a growing, acclaimed business—and a baby on the way. Managing it all can be challenging, but with a BlackBerry® smartphone, it's not as daunting. Our business is small but my BlackBerry 8830 from Verizon Wireless puts me on equal footing with any other business. I chose Verizon Wireless for coverage and reliability. Now I can jet off to Hong Kong with my office in my pocket. That's empowering. That's magic."

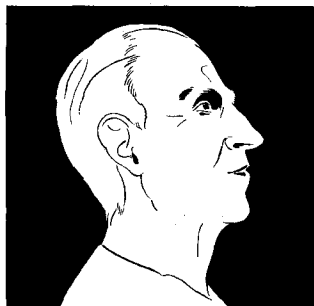
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CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK VETERAN'S DAY



Frederic Franklin, born in 1914, is certainly the oldest ballet dancer still performing. In 1938, he joined the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo, and he spent nearly three decades with that company, touring every burg in America. He matched his great partner, Alexandra Danilova, in brio, and at that time, when ballet still looked suspect to many people, audiences liked him all the more in that he seemed like a guy, not a sissy. He also learned fast and forgot nothing, traits that led to his second career, as ballet master to many American troupes. Since 1997, he has been working steadily with American Ballet Theatre, where, last year, I saw him do Friar Lawrence in "Romeo and Juliet," a role suited to his age—ninety-three!—and good-heartedness. He seemed to be in Heaven already. On Jan. 13-14, the Guggenheim's "Works & Process" series is holding a tribute to him, in which he'll appear with his biographer, Leslie Norton. The excellent David Hallberg and Julie Kent, of A.B.T., will perform the duet from "Gaité Parisienne," originated by him and Danilova and, people say, never forgotten by anyone who saw it.

—Joan Acocella

THE THEATRE OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

Please call the phone number listed with the theatre for timetables and ticket information.

ALMOST AN EVENING

Atlantic Theatre Company presents three comic plays by the film director Ethan Coen ("No Country for Old Men"). F. Murray Abraham, Mark Linn-Baker, and Elizabeth Marvel are part of the ensemble cast. In previews. (Stage 2, at 330 W. 16th St. 212-279-4200.)

BETWEEN THE DEVIL AND THE DEEP BLUE SEA

The British theatre troupe 1927 performs its Edinburgh Festival Fringe winner, a surreal combination of silent film, live music, and theatrical performance, written and directed by Suzanne Andrade. Part of the "Under the Radar" festival. In previews. Opens Jan. 14. (P.S. 122, at 150 First Ave., at 9th St. 212-352-3101.)

COME BACK, LITTLE SHEBA

S. Epatha Merkerson stars in William Inge's play from 1950, about a faded beauty married to an alcoholic. Michael Pressman directs the Manhattan Theatre Club production. In previews. (Biltmore, 261 W. 47th St. 212-239-6200.)

ETIQUETTE

As part of the "Under the Radar" festival, the Foundry Theatre stages an interactive theatre experience at the Veselka restaurant, in which ticket holders are fed lines over headphones and act out the "play" themselves. Opens Jan. 9. (Second Ave. at 9th St. 866-811-4111.)

THE LITTLE MERMAID

Francesca Zambello directs an adaptation of the film, with a book by Doug Wright and music and lyrics by Alan Menken, Howard Ashman, and Glenn Slater. In previews. Opens Jan. 10. (Lunt-Fontanne, 205 W. 46th St. 212-307-4747.)

THE MADDENING TRUTH

Keen Company presents the world premiere of David Hay's drama about Ernest Hemingway's third wife, the war correspondent Martha Gellhorn. Previews begin Jan. 15. (Clurman, 410 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200.)

THE MANDRAKE

Jim Calder directs Niccolò Machiavelli's play from 1518, in a new translation by Peter Constantine, in which a young man tries to seduce a married woman. In previews. (Pearl, 80 St. Marks Pl. 212-598-9802.)

NEW JERUSALEM

At Classic Stage Company, the world premiere of a play by David Ives, about the seventeenth-century philosopher Spinoza, starring Richard Easton. Walter Bobbie ("Chicago") directs. In previews. Opens Jan. 13. (136 E. 13th St. 212-352-3101.)

NOVEMBER

Nathan Lane, Laurie Metcalf, and Dylan Baker star in David Mamet's new comedy, about an incumbent President seeking a second term. Joe Mantello directs. In previews. (Barrymore, 243 W. 47th St. 212-239-6200.)

THE SHAUGHRAUN

Storm Theatre presents the Irish writer Dion Boucicault's romantic comedy from 1847, a farce about a fugitive who has been falsely accused of a crime. Peter Dobbins directs. In previews. Opens Jan. 10. (145 W. 46th St. 212-868-4444.)

SLAUGHTERHOUSE-FIVE OR: THE CHILDREN'S CRUSADE

Kurt Vonnegut's novel is adapted by Eric Simonson, presented by the Godlight Theatre Company. Previews begin Jan. 11. (59E59, at 59 E. 59th St. 212-279-4200.)

THE 39 STEPS

Roundabout Theatre Company presents a spoof of the Hitchcock spy thriller (which was based on a book by John Buchan), adapted by Patrick Barlow, in which four cast members play more than a hundred and fifty roles. In previews. Opens Jan. 15. (American Airlines Theatre, 227 W. 42nd St. 212-719-1300.)

TROJAN WOMEN

Classical Theatre of Harlem presents a reimagining of the Greek classic, incorporating interviews with civil-war survivors from Sierra Leone and Liberia. Part of the "Under the Radar" festival; Alfred Preisser directs. Previews begin Jan. 10. (Harlem Stage Gatehouse, 150 Convent Ave., at W. 135th St. 212-281-9240.)

TWO THOUSAND YEARS

The New Group presents the U.S. premiere of a play by Mike Leigh, about a Jewish family in suburban London whose son suddenly becomes devout. Scott Elliott directs. Previews begin Jan. 15. (Acorn, 410 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200.)

UNDER THE RADAR

The Public Theatre presents new work by up-and-coming playwrights, including Young Jean Lee's "Church," Belarus Free Theatre's "Generation Jeans," and the San Francisco-based Suicide Kings' "In Spite of Everything." Jan. 9-20. (Public, 425 Lafayette St., and various venues. 212-967-7555. For a full schedule, visit www.publictheater.org.)

WIDOWS

Hal Brooks directs the New York premiere of a play by Ariel Dorfman, based on his novel, about a village in wartime in which several women claim that a washed-up dead body is their loved one. Previews begin Jan. 10. (59E59, at 59 E. 59th St. 212-279-4200.)

NOW PLAYING

AUGUST: OSAGE COUNTY

In Tracy Letts's play, Beverly Weston (Dennis Letts, the playwright's father), a stalled poet, enlists a maid to help care for his wife, Violet (Deanna Dunagan): the poor thing has cancer of the mouth, as well as of the mind. Beverly hires Johnna (Kimberly Guerrero), a Native American woman, to deal with the household chores; in short order, a number of "wacky" female characters begin to populate the house, who show up when Beverly goes missing. The fine director, Anna D. Shapiro, works to keep the melodrama from overtaking the rest of the show—and sometimes succeeds. Even so, the family's secrets feel as contrived as the play's regionalism—a corny mint julep laced with Valium. (Reviewed in our issue of 12/24 & 31/07.) (Imperial, 245 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.)

C'EST DUCKIE!

Leggy, grungy performers from the London burlesque troupe Duckie dutifully ply their trade on the tabletops, but they don't have much zing in this ragged evening of cabaret acts and dance numbers. Part of the trouble is that a few café tables in a Lower East Side cultural center do not a Vauxhall night club make. Then there are the show's conceptual-theatre pretensions, which include a byzantine method of having each table "order" the naughty acts off a menu by consensus. After all the fuss, the performances arrive noticeably undercooked, only occasionally producing a whiff of virtuosity or transgressive creativity. The best ones are slyly raunchy, like the contortionist who extends tortilla chips to patrons with her toes while balancing a dish of salsa on her upside-down crotch. (CSV Cultural Center, 107 Suffolk St. 212-352-3101.)

CULTUREMART 2008

HERE Arts Center puts on new work by its resident artists, including Taylor Mac and Alexandra Beller. (145 Sixth Ave., near Spring St. 212-352-3101.)

THE DEVIL'S DISCIPLE

This political farce isn't usually considered to be among George Bernard Shaw's best works, but its revival at the Irish Repertory proves that even the lesser works of great minds can stand the test of time. Set in a small New England town during the American Revolution, an uncle's hanging and a father's death bring Dick (Lorenzo Pisoni), a family's black sheep—and a self-proclaimed devotee of the Devil—back to his strictly Puritan homestead. While paying a visit to the local minister, he is mistaken for the minister himself, who is being sought by the British for his pro-independence leanings, but he doesn't protest when he is arrested and sentenced to execution. Meanwhile, the minister, rather than clearing

up the confusion, decides to flee town. A top-shelf cast brings a charming polish to this otherwise crude work, and Tony Walton, known primarily for his award-winning design work, provides near-seamless direction. (132 W. 22nd St. 212-727-2737.)

HAPPY DAYS

Samuel Beckett's bleak portrait of companionship, starring Fiona Shaw, Deborah Warner ("Medea") directs. (BAM's Harvey Theatre, 651 Fulton St. 718-636-4100.)

THE HOMECOMING

Harold Pinter's 1967 play is both a family romance and a turf war. A professor of philosophy, Teddy (the excellent James Frain), returns to London after six years in America to introduce his wife, Ruth (Eve Best), to his father, a butcher named Max (Ian McShane), to his uncle Sam (Michael McKean), a chauffeur, and to his brothers, Lenny (Raúl Esparza), a pimp, and Joey (Gareth Saxe), an aspiring boxer, all of whom haunt Max's cavernous living room, a sort of cave for the barbarians within. Among the many pleasures of the current revival (directed by Daniel Sullivan)—a fine ensemble, adroit playing, limpid interpretation—the most piquant is the revelation that the play is profoundly funny. (12/24 & 31/07) (Cort, 138 W. 48th St. 212-239-6200.)

alive. "The Seafarer" breaks through our secular smugness and manages to make the small gestures of connection, charity, and change feel like the true resurrection. (12/17/07) (Booth, 222 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.)

Also Playing

AVENUE Q: Golden, 252 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **BECKETT SHORTS:** New York Theatre Workshop, 79 E. 4th St. 212-239-6200. **A CHORUS LINE:** Schoenfeld, 236 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **THE COLOR PURPLE:** Broadway Theatre, Broadway at 53rd St. 212-239-6200. **CURTAINS:** Al Hirschfeld, 302 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **DIE MOMMIE DIE!:** New World Stages, 340 W. 50th St. 212-239-6200. Through Jan. 13. **THE DROWSY CHAPERONE:** Marquis, Broadway at 45th St. 212-307-4100. **EDWARD THE SECOND:** Peter Jay Sharp, 416 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200. **THE FARNSWORTH INVENTION:** Music Box, 239 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **IS HE DEAD?:** Lyceum, 149 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **JERSEY BOYS:** August Wilson, 245 W. 52nd St. 212-239-6200. **JUMP:** Union Square Theatre, 100 E. 17th St. 212-307-4100. **MONTY PYTHON'S SPAM-**

TABLES FOR TWO PERI ELA



1361 Lexington Ave. (212-410-4300)—The 92nd Street Y is a little bit like a desert well, attracting people to what would otherwise be a cultural wasteland at night: restaurants have begun to spring up around it, like date palms. Last Valentine's Day, a couple from the neighborhood, Silay Ciner, a Turk who grew up in Istanbul, and his wife, Jill, who is from Denver, opened Peri Elä, a block south of the Y. The food is traditional Turkish, but the space, formerly home to a Greek coffee shop, of all things (*Molon lave!*), is what you might call Manhatt-Turko-NATO chic: exposed brick, pressed tin, semi-nudes on wood-paneled walls, Amy Winehouse on the stereo. "All the Turkish restaurants in the city have that ethnic, *touristique* look about them," Silay (pronounced "Sly") said the other night. "You know, the kilim, the Oriental rugs, the hookahs. I didn't grow up in that kind of atmosphere. In Istanbul, there are hundreds of restaurants like this one."

On most nights, the Ciners stand near the door, greeting their expanding roster of regulars, who, as per Upper East Side custom, tend to find an entrée they like and stick with it. When you ask the Ciners (or a waiter) about a dish, you

often hear about its popularity rather than its ingredients, about which they are uncommonly secretive, perhaps to foster the impression that the recipes have been smuggled at great risk across the Bosphorus. But what does it matter, when the popularity is justified? Among the many excellent small dishes, or *meze*, are *tarama* (a rich carp-roe spread), *ezme* (a gazpacho-like spicy veggie purée), and two versions of *patlican* (eggplant)—*salatasi* (smoked and mashed, with olive oil and garlic) and *soslu* (diced and fried, with a tomato sauce). In terms of justifiable popularity, perhaps nothing trumps two comfort-food classics: *manti*, diminutive beef dumplings in a garlic-yogurt sauce, and the lamb-kebab *yogurtlu*, grilled chunks of meat floating in a bath of yogurt and soggy pita bits. The portions aren't overwhelming, but in case of kebab-and-phylo overdose, a restorative shot of raki, an anise-flavored liqueur served with water and ice, can help rationalize an extra round of rice pudding. *Lezzetliydi!* (Open daily for lunch and dinner. Entrées \$17-\$24.)

—Nick Paumgarten

THE O'NEILL FESTIVAL AT TEN

The Playwrights Theatre and Yale University celebrate Eugene O'Neill with an offering of free film screenings, readings, and discussions; participants include Zoe Caldwell, Marian Seldes, Natasha Richardson, and Charles Durning. (Provincetown Playhouse, 133 MacDougal St. To make reservations, call 212-279-4200. For a full schedule, visit www.eugeneoneill.net. Through Jan. 13.)

THE SEAFARER

Splendidly written and directed by Conor McPherson, this play begins on Christmas Eve, as the strapping and saturnine Sharky (David Morse) has returned to his family home to attend to his older brother, Richard (the wonderful Jim Norton), who has recently gone blind but who nonetheless rules the chaotic roost. New York rarely sees the kind of stellar, freewheeling playing that makes McPherson's tragicomic spectacle of dereliction come so

LOT: Shubert, 225 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200. **OH, THE HUMANITY AND OTHER EXCLAMATIONS:** Flea, 41 White St. 212-352-3101. **PIAF:** **LOVE CONQUERS ALL:** SoHo Playhouse, 15 Vandam St. 212-691-1555. **PUMPGIRL:** City Center, Stage II, 131 W. 55th St. 212-581-1212. Through Jan. 13. **ROCK 'N' ROLL:** Bernard B. Jacobs, 242 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **RUNT OF THE LITTER:** 37 Arts, 450 W. 37th St. 212-307-4100. **SPEECH & DEBATE:** Roundabout Underground, 111 W. 46th St. 212-719-1300. **SPRING AWAKENING:** Eugene O'Neill, 230 W. 49th St. 212-239-6200. **THE 25TH ANNUAL PUTNAM COUNTY SPELLING BEE:** Circle in the Square, 50th St. between Broadway and Eighth Ave. 212-239-6200. **XANADU:** Helen Hayes, 240 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200. **YELLOW FACE:** Public, 425 Lafayette St. 212-967-7555. Through Jan. 13. **YOUNG FRANKENSTEIN:** Hilton, 213 W. 42nd St. 212-307-4100.

NIGHT LIFE ROCK AND POP

Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it's advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.

BARBÈS

376 9th St., Park Slope, Brooklyn (718-965-9177)—Jan. 11: The alluring vocalist **Lucia Pulido** and her ensemble **Palenque** experiment with the folk music of Colombia. Later on Jan. 11: The bookish fellows in **One Ring Zero** favor toy instruments and clever lyrics. Jan. 12: **Alash**, a group of young Tuvan throat singers. Later on Jan. 12: The long-running ensemble **Son de Madera**, from Veracruz, delivers a set of

DROM

85 Avenue A, between 5th and 6th Sts. (212-777-1157)—Jan. 11: **Rana Santacruz**, an accordion-wielding Mexican who favors sailor songs with a Celtic flair; the San Francisco ensemble **Rupa and the April Fishes**, which plays a multitude of genres and is fronted by a physician who sings in French, Spanish, English, Hindi, and Romany; **Ramiro Musotto**, an Argentinean who lives in Bahia, Brazil, and who plays electrified and psychedelic music on that country's single-stringed percussion instrument, the *berimbau*; and the local favorites **Slavic Soul Party!** (see Barbès).

FLORENCE GOULD HALL

French Institute Alliance Française, 55 E. 59th St. (212-307-7171)—Jan. 12: **Howard Jones**, who first found fame in the eighties as a big-haired performer of synthesizer-based feel-good New Wave music, now favors an acoustic approach.

French Rockin' Boogie to Connolly's, an Irish pub in midtown with a fine wooden dance floor. (121 W. 45th St. Jan. 13. For more information, call 212-685-7597, or visit www.letszydeco.com.)

TERMINAL 5

610 W. 56th St. (212-582-6600)—Jan. 14: Perhaps the most musically adventurous act currently signed to a major label, **Mars Volta** is a duo comprised of **Cedric Bixler-Zavala** and **Omar Rodriguez-Lopez**, two fearless players who know each other from their comparatively conventional Texas hardcore band, **At the Drive-In**.

WEBSTER HALL

125 E. 11th St. (212-353-1600)—Jan. 13: The fifth annual "Globalfest" show presents a dozen acts, including the Argentine accordion master **Chango Spasiuk**, the *mbalax* star from Senegal **Fallou Dieng**, the Marseilles-based vocal and percussion group **Lo**



The sprawling Staten Island hip-hop collective Wu-Tang Clan returns for two shows at the Hammerstein Ballroom.

the dance music *son jarocho*. Jan. 14: The local act **Las Rubias del Norte** always charms with its jewel-box renditions of Latin big-band songs. Later on Jan. 14: **Chicha Libre** lets loose on lost *chicha* classics from Peru. Jan. 15: The neo-Balkan brass band **Slavic Soul Party!**

BARROW STREET THEATRE

27 Barrow St. (212-239-6200)—Jan. 9-10, Jan. 12-14, and Jan. 16-20: The **Asylum Street Spankers**, a long-standing freewheeling acoustic-music group from Austin, Texas, are performing a musical revue about life on the road called "What? And Give Up Show Biz?"

BOWERY BALLROOM

6 Delancey St. (212-533-2111)—Jan. 9: **Kate Nash**, from London by way of Dublin, plays the piano and sings sunny odes to boy troubles, winning over fans on both sides of the Atlantic. Her debut album, "Made of Bricks," which is being released here the day before this show, hit No. 1 at home instantly, and this appearance has long been sold out. Jan. 12: Back in the mid-eighties, two friends, **Dan Stuart** and **Steve Wynn**, were living in Los Angeles and working with their bands, **Green on Red** and the **Dream Syndicate**, respectively, to revive a flowery psychedelic sound in a movement that became known as the **Paisley Underground**. One day in 1985, they holed up for thirty-six hours with some friends and beer and recorded a bunch of songs with a rocking country beat. Billing themselves as **Danny & Dusty**, they released the album "The Lost Weekend," which went out of print quickly but took on a second life when the alternative-country sound grew popular in the nineties. The two recently got together again, with many of the same friends, and recorded the album "Cast Iron Soul."

CARNEGIE HALL

57th St. at Seventh Ave. (212-247-7800)—Jan. 12: The Beatles cover band **1964... the Tribute** returns to the days of mop tops and screaming teen-agers.

HAMMERSTEIN BALLROOM

Manhattan Center, 311 W. 34th St. (212-307-7171)—Jan. 12 and Jan. 17: The enduringly enigmatic Staten Island hip-hop collective the **Wu-Tang Clan** continues to revolutionize its genre. Their new album, "8 Diagrams," pushes their sound in a trippy, almost psychedelic direction, courtesy of **RZA**, and the m.c.s **Method Man**, **Raekwon**, and **Ghostface Killah** are in fighting shape.

HIRO BALLROOM

The Maritime Hotel, 371 W. 16th St. (212-307-7171)—Jan. 12: The **Budos Band**, an Afro-soul group from Staten Island; **Jose Conde y Ola Fresca**, a funky outfit from Brooklyn; **Burkina Electric**, a group from Burkina Faso featuring the whirlwind vocalist **Mai Lingani** and **Lukas Ligeti** (the son of the late Hungarian composer **György Ligeti**) that mixes West African rhythms and Western club beats; and the local Latin group **Zemog, el Gallo Bueno**.

JOE'S PUB

425 Lafayette St. (212-539-8777)—Jan. 11: "Weimar New York," an ongoing cabaret-style mix of musical high jinks, neo-burlesque, and political satire, conjures the spirit of nineteen-twenties Berlin. This edition, hosted by **Justin Bond** of the drag cabaret duo **Kiki and Herb**, features the downtown performance doyenne **Penny Arcade**, the accordionist and vocalist **Rachelle Garnier**, the cabaret habitué **Daniel Isengart**, fresh from an uptown stint at **Café Sabarsky**, and others. Jan. 14: The U.K. folk-rock sensation **KT Tunstall**.

KNITTING FACTORY

74 Leonard St., between Broadway and Church St. (212-219-3132)—Jan. 14: "Ribbon of Highway—Endless Skyway" is a tribute to **Woody Guthrie** by **Jimmy LaFave**, **Sarah Lee Guthrie & Johnny Irion**, the **Burns Sisters**, and others.

"LET'S ZYDECO"

The concert series dedicated to the indigenous music of Louisiana brings **Geno Delafosse** and

Còr de la Plana (who sing in Occitan), the Hungarian Gypsy rockers **Little Cow**, and the highly theatrical Italian singer-songwriter **Vinicio Capossela**.

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

ALGONQUIN HOTEL

59 W. 44th St. (212-840-6800)—Through Jan. 12: **Andrea Marcovici** devotes the evening to the songs of **Rodgers and Hart**.

DIZZY'S CLUB COCA-COLA

Broadway at 60th St. (212-258-9595)—Jan. 8-13: The **Clayton Brothers** quintet. Three siblings—the bassist **John**, the saxophonist **Jeff**, and the pianist **Gerald**—make up the nucleus of this group, which is augmented by the trumpeter **Terrell Stafford**. Jan. 14: **Stefon Harris**, the standout vibraphonist of his generation, uses his band **Blackout** to investigate the funk and hip-hop influences that he shies away from when appearing with more strait-laced jazz ensembles.

IRIDIUM

1650 Broadway, at 51st St. (212-582-2121)—Jan. 9-13: The saxophonist **Kenny Garrett** had a high-profile gig with **Miles Davis** in the eighties, but that stint as a sideman only gave a hint of his prodigious talent, which is in evidence in his solo work and in his occasional collaborations with **Pharoah Sanders**. Mondays belong to the electric-guitar innovator **Les Paul**. The **Mingus Big Band** takes over on Tuesdays.

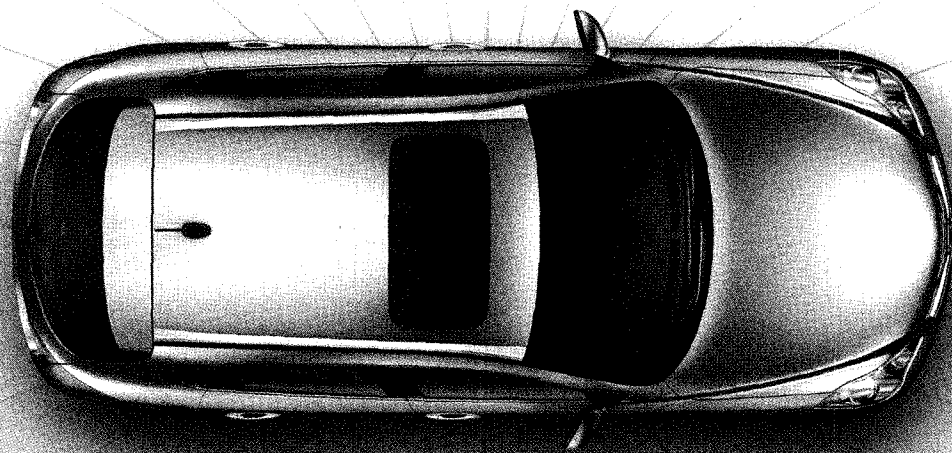
JAZZ AT LINCOLN CENTER

Broadway at 60th St. (212-721-6500)—Jan. 11-12: The clarinetist **Victor Goines** joins **Marcus Printup**, **Wycliffe Gordon**, and other transplanted musical scions from New Orleans for a tribute to that city's fathers of jazz: **Louis Armstrong**, **Jelly Roll Morton**, **Joe (King) Oliver**, and **Sidney Bechet**.

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JAZZ STANDARD

116 E. 27th St. (212-576-2232)—Jan. 9: The keyboardist and composer **Manuel Valera** presents "The Impressions of Expressions Suite," an ambitious nine-part suite for jazz band, percussion, and strings. Jan. 10-13: **Regina Carter**, probably the most acclaimed jazz violinist working today, fleshes out her ensemble with the clarinetist **Darryl Harper** and the accordionist **Gary Versace** and, on the second night of her run, the wily squeeze-box player **Will Holshouser**. Jan. 14: The popular sounds of the **Maria Schneider Jazz Orchestra**.

KNITTING FACTORY

74 Leonard St., between Broadway and Church St. (212-219-3132)—Jan. 12: The 2008 NYC Winter Jazzfest settles in to its home. Among the bands appearing are **Ben Allison** and **Man Size Safe**, **David Murray's Black Saint Quartet**, **Dave Douglas's Magic Circle**, **Wayne Horvitz's Sweeter Than the Day**, the **Pan Asian Chamber Jazz Ensemble**, and a trio with **Don Byron**, **Iva Bittova**, and **Lisa Moore**.

VILLAGE VANGUARD

178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (212-255-4037)—Jan. 8-13: When it comes to putting together trios, the drummer **Paul Motian** loves to leave the bass player at home. For this engagement, he's enlisted two particularly strong collaborators in the pianist **Jason Moran** and the saxophonist **Chris Potter**.



Lisa M. Robinson's photograph "Solo," in her exhibition "Snowbound," at Klompching.

ART MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM

Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (212-535-7710)—"Eternal Ancestors: The Art of the Central African Reliquary." Through March 2. ♦ "The Gates of Paradise: Lorenzo Ghiberti's Renaissance Masterpiece." Through Jan. 13. ♦ "Tara Donovan at the Met." Through April 27. ♦ "In the Light of Poussin: The Classical Landscape Tradition." Through April 13. ♦ When the U.S.S. Constitution sank the H.M.S. Guerrière, during the War of 1812, a commemorative urn was presented to Captain Isaac Hull. Fabricated by the young Philadelphia firm of Thomas Fletcher and Sidney Gardiner, the widely admired trophy helped establish the pair as preeminent designers and manufacturers of luxury goods, who supplied their increasingly wealthy American clients with presentation swords and medals, tea services, and other swank wares.

"Silversmiths to the Nation: Thomas Fletcher & Sidney Gardiner, 1808-1842" showcases not only argent treasures but also rare working drawings, die blocks, and examples of French, English, and classical metalwork that inspired the pair. Through May 4. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:30, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 9.)

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

11 W. 53rd St. (212-708-9400)—"Martin Puryear." Through Jan. 14. ♦ "Multiplex: Directions in Art, 1970 to Now." Through July 28. ♦ "Lucian Freud: The Painter's Etchings." Through March 10. ♦ "New Perspectives in Latin American Art, 1930-2006: Selections from a Decade of Acquisitions." Through Feb. 25. ♦ "Projects 86: Gert & Uwe Tobias." Through Feb. 25. (Open Wednesdays through Mondays, 10:30 to 5:30, and Friday evenings until 8.)

GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM

Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (212-423-3500)—"Foto: Modernity in Central Europe, 1918-1945." Through Jan. 13. (Open Saturdays through Wednesdays, 10 to 5:45, and Fridays, 10 to 8.)

WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART

Madison Ave. at 75th St. (800-944-8639)—"Lawrence Weiner: As Far As the Eye Can See." Through Feb. 10. ♦ "Kara Walker: My Complement, My Enemy, My Oppressor, My Love." Through Feb. 3. ♦ "Jacob Lawrence's 'Migration

York." Through Jan. 13. (Open Tuesdays through Thursdays, 11 to 6, Fridays, 11 to 9, and weekends, 11 to 5.)

JEWISH MUSEUM

Fifth Ave. at 92nd St. (212-423-3200)—"From The New Yorker to Shrek: The Art of William Steig." Through March 16. ♦ "Camille Pissarro: Impressions of City and Country." Through Feb. 3. (Open Saturdays through Wednesdays, 11 to 5:45, and Thursdays, 11 to 8.)

MUSEUM OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Fifth Ave. at 103rd St. (212-534-1672)—"John Sloan's New York." After working for a decade in Philadelphia as a newspaper illustrator, Sloan came to New York in 1904 to try his hand at art. A leading light of the Ashcan school, he retained a journalistic eye, as evidenced in thirty-four affectionate and broadly comic works from his "New York Life" series. These etchings and drawings, made between 1905 and 1933, favor the Zeitgeist of the street—matrons and urchins in Washington Square Park, tenement dwellers on fire escapes and rooftops, the beery back room at McSorley's. Faces and garments stand out with caricatured clarity from passages of sooty black—there's even a proto-Marilyn moment with a skirt and a subway updraft. Through Feb. 24. ♦ "Manhattan Noon: Photographs by Gus Powell." Through March 16. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 10 to 5.)

NEW MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART

235 Bowery, at Prince St. (212-219-1222)—The museum inaugurates its new building with "Unmonumental: The Object in the 21st Century," an international survey of recent sculpture that examines the antiheroic tendency in contemporary art. Through March 23. (Open Wednesdays and weekends, noon to 6, and Thursdays and Fridays, noon to 10.)

GALLERIES—UPTOWN

ROGER CATHERINEAU

Because the painted, collaged, and otherwise reworked black-and-white photograms by this little-known French photographer (1925-1962) recall both Fox Talbot's early experimentation and Man Ray's Dada-inspired work in the twenties, this show has a slightly retro feel. The pictures, nearly all from the nineteen-fifties, also share a tightly wound kinetic energy with the Abstract Expressionism of that period, and that energy hasn't dissipated. Manic exuberance gives way to a looser, more lyrical spirit here and there, but the tone is dark and brooding, even in the work flecked with accents of bright color. Through Feb. 16. (Gitterman, 170 E. 75th St. 212-734-0868.)

BARBARA CRANE

One of the few women photographers to emerge from Chicago's legendary Institute of Design, Crane shows modestly scaled black-and-white work that picks up on the school's tradition of Bauhaus-inflected experimentation and graphic innovation. Her first solo exhibition in a New York gallery is a teaser, sampling work from the sixties and seventies that hovers tellingly between representation and abstraction. Harry Callahan is the most obvious template; Crane's elegantly calligraphic female nudes echo his, but her portraits of passersby, with their jazzy overlays of patterned neon, also suggest Ray Metzger. Influences aside, Crane, who turns eighty this year, is a woman on the verge of being rediscovered, and this is an excellent place to start. Through Jan. 26. (Higher Pictures, 764 Madison Ave., at 65th St. 212-249-6100.)

SARAH LUCAS

Lucas's five-ton painted-bronze horse, "Perceval," is so laden with British references that it threatens to sink as an art work lodged in the heart of tourist New York. There are nods to King Arthur's court (Perceval was the knight who discovered the Holy Grail), Tennyson, and the use of the bulky shire breed in royal processions (inspiring the manufacture of mantelpiece tchotchkes). The two giant cast-concrete squashes in the cart behind the horse are puzzling additions. Nonetheless, plopped down on a corner just outside Central Park, with the sight and acrid scent of carriage horses as a backdrop, and with children scrambling onto its back, "Per-

Series': Selections from the Phillips Collection." Through Jan. 6. (Open Wednesdays, Thursdays, and weekends, 11 to 6, and Fridays, 1 to 9.)

BROOKLYN MUSEUM

200 Eastern Parkway (718-638-5000)—"Infinite Island: Contemporary Caribbean Art." Through Jan. 27. ♦ "Brushed with Light: American Landscape Watercolors from the Collection." Through Jan. 27. ♦ "Global Feminisms Remix." Through Feb. 3. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5, and Saturdays and Sundays, 11 to 6.)

AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY

Central Park W. at 79th St. (212-769-5100)—"Water: H₂O = Life." Through May 26. ♦ For the next few months, around five hundred specimens will flit through the Butterfly Conservatory, a pocket-size hothouse planted with orchids and other rain-forest flora. Through May 26. (Open daily, 10 to 5:45.)

JAPAN SOCIETY

333 E. 47th St. (212-752-3015)—"Making a Home: Japanese Contemporary Artists in New



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CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK SEEING IS BELIEVING

At the close of a middling year for hip-hop, two genuinely odd videos emerged from the sleepy genre. Working with the producer Shawty Redd,



Snoop Dogg created "Sensual Seduction," a bubbling synthesizer-heavy track that finds the rapper doing two things he does not usually do. First of all, he sings. Second of all, he expresses concern for his female partner's sexual satisfaction. (Also of note is the effect that the director, Melina, added to make the already retro video look like a fourth-generation videotape.) Master P's "Gutta Time" is not the same kind of lark. In the video, a group of Klansmen face a group of black men in a game of basketball. The Klansmen also shoot guns, drink beer, and ride in wheelchairs. The video appears to be no more than a symbol salad, neither shocking nor insightful. It is also prefaced with four apologies/disclaimers and one lame postscript: the players who "desegregated" the court were "lynched the next day." Huh? If you can make sense of this and you are not Master P, more power to you. The song makes only passing references to the Klan and racism. But it's intriguing. You may even watch it twice.

—Sasha Frere-Jones

ceval" is a cheeky tribute to British culture—high, low, and somewhere in between—transported with subversive colonial glee onto American soil. Through May 1. (Public Art Fund, Doris C. Freedman Plaza, 60th St. at Fifth Ave. 212-980-4575.)

MARY ELLEN MARK

Mark, a frequent contributor to this magazine, shows vintage black-and-white photographs and maquettes of her 1979 book, "Ward 81," a harrowing record of thirty-six days spent with the female patients in the lock-down ward of an Oregon mental hospital. Uncomfortably intimate and unflinchingly direct, Marks's photos, like Nan Goldin's recent self-portraits and films, bring us face to face with the anger, hurt, fear, and confusion of institutionalized women. The images are especially raw and affecting in this small format, pasted down on paper and surrounded by printer's notes. The lack of polish is entirely appropriate to images that still feel dangerous, furious, and important. Through Feb. 2. (John McWhinnie at Glenn Horowitz, 50½ E. 64th St. 212-754-5626.)

Short List

JANE FREILICHER: De Nagy, 724 Fifth Ave. 212-262-5050. Opens Jan. 12. **"DRAWING IN SPACE":** Feigen & Co., 34 E. 69th St. 212-628-0700. Through Feb. 25. **"HANSEL AND GRETEL":** Gallery Met, Lincoln Center Plaza, at 65th St. 212-870-7441. Through Feb. 29.

GALLERIES—CHELSEA

ALBERTO BURRI

In art, biography is often destiny. Take the case of Burri (1915-1995), the Italian artist who started painting on U.S. mail sacks while interned as a prisoner of war in Texas in the early forties. Burri quickly broadened his scope, working with burlap, plastic, ceramic, Cellotex (the same insulation material favored by Richard Artschwager), and *acrovillico*, a commercial coating that dries on the canvas to look like a parched riverbed. This is a banner show for a deeply influential but under-known artist, whose work paved the way for both Arte Povera and Rauschenberg. Through Jan. 19. (Mitchell-Innes & Nash, 534 W. 26th St. 212-744-7400.)

O. WINSTON LINK

Link's photographs of steam locomotives chugging into rural whistle stops are kitsch Americana in the Normal Rockwell vein—homey, nostalgic, and reassuring. Made in the nineteen-fifties with casts of cooperative trainmen and willing locals, they also anticipate the elaborately staged images of Gregory Crewdson, Steven Klein, and Justine Kurland. Although Link's idea of a dramatic moment was a gorgeous plume of steam billowing into the night sky, he framed such events with a combination of small-town life and Hollywood lighting, and turned ordinary train arrivals into cinematic occasions. Through Jan. 12. (Danziger Projects, 521 W. 26th St. 212-629-6778.)

CAREY YOUNG

In classic nineteen-seventies Conceptualist performance—whether by Valie Export, Bruce Nauman, or Mierle Laderman Ukeles—simple physical gestures could activate urban space. Those grubby streets, however, are a far cry from the vast office-park construction sites in Dubai and Sharjah where Young photographs her reenactments. Dressed in a suit and heels, she lies down like Export, mops the concrete like Ukeles, and so on. Context-free globalization mixes eerily with art-historical homage. Absurdist simulacra continue to infiltrate the psyche in a video of Young on her analyst's couch, "free-associating" the names of multinational corporations with slogans that alternately promote "inspiration" and "imagination." Through Jan. 12. (Cooper, 521 W. 21st St. 212-255-5247.)

Short List

KAREN KILIMNIK: 303 Gallery, 525 W. 22nd St. 212-255-1121. Opens Jan. 12. **JOHN MILLER:** Petzel, 535 W. 22nd St. 212-680-9467. Through Feb. 2. **MARTIN SCHOELLER:** Hasted Hunt, 529 W. 20th St. 212-627-0006. Through Feb. 23. **JOEL**

SHAPIRO: PaceWildenstein, 545 W. 22nd St. 212-989-4258. Through Jan. 19. **"90° THE MARGINS AS CENTER":** Rosen, 525 W. 24th St. 212-627-6000. Through Jan. 26.

GALLERIES—DOWNTOWN

BRIAN BELOTT

Belott's show is déjà vu all over again—a sweet, familiar holdover from America's recent past. Two video monitors, propped on stacks of fake books in lieu of pedestals, play seventies and eighties promos for late-night TV, complete with disco-era graphics. A soundtrack piped into an adjacent room conjures the anesthetized peppiness of a vintage motel lounge. Clothespins arranged like wainscoting evoke hippie crafts, as do a series of paintings on glass that feature grinning Peter Max-like cats. Belott's approach is manic and unpredictable, and the results are mixed, but the oddball sincerity of his installation is contagious. Through Jan. 13. (Canada, 55 Chrystie St. 212-925-4631.)

TOM BURR / WALTER PFEIFFER

The eroticism of space and architecture is explored in this joint exhibition, which marries Burr's riffs on minimalist sculpture with Pfeiffer's beefcake photographs. Pants, dress shirts, and socks have been draped over bits of unfinished furniture in the sculptural contribution, which Burr conceived for an uninhabited unit in a Le Corbusier-designed apartment building in France. Pfeiffer's pictures introduce faces into the mix: short-haired lads mugging for the camera. Viewed together, the projects conjure up the scene of a cheeky kept boy, hanging around his sugar daddy's well-appointed apartment. Through Jan. 19. (Swiss Institute, 495 Broadway, at Broome St. 212-925-2035.)

"THE HAND-DRAWN NEGATIVE: CLICHÉS-VERRE, 1854-1862"

The genre of the cliché-verre—in which landscapes are etched onto photosensitive glass plates—hovers somewhere between photography and printmaking. It didn't have the staying power of other techniques in either medium, and you can see why in several underwhelming, slightly fuzzy examples. But most of the works here—sweeping vistas of meadows, seascapes, and shaded country lanes, along with a scene of a crouching tiger, by Delacroix, and one of a young boy relieving himself in a doorway, by Millet—offer fascinating evidence of how even the giants of nineteenth-century French painting (Corot and Rousseau among them) played with the new technology. Through Jan. 19. (Freeman, 560 Broadway, at Prince St. 212-966-5154.)

GALLERIES—BROOKLYN

STEVEN BROWER

Promotional materials for the Brower Propulsion Laboratory, a self-proclaimed "aerospace dwarf company," inform us that this "Jackass"-style NASA "has battled to continue flying the flag of creative scientific thinking at an undisclosed location in the wilds of East Williamsburg." Evidence is displayed in the form of a homespun (dwarf-size) spacesuit, meals freeze-dried in Baggies, and designs for an apparatus to enable astronauts to smoke in space. A convincingly drab diagram of the "BPL Corporate Structure" includes a Department of Alcohol Consumption and a Department of Trial and Error. Through Jan. 21. (Parker's Box, 193 Grand St. 718-388-2882.)

Short List

DEVON DIKEOU: Art Moving Projects, 166 N. 12th St. 917-301-6680. Through Feb. 10. **LISA M. ROBINSON:** Klompching, 111 Front St. 212-796-2070. Through Feb. 29. **"EVERYDAY EDEN":** Public Art Fund at Metrotech Center, between Jay St. and Flatbush Ave. 212-980-4575. Through Sept. 2.

JASHAR AWAN; OPPOSITE: JOHN RITTER

DANCE

NEW YORK CITY BALLET

This week, the company alternates between two evening-length ballets: Balanchine's magnificent three-part study in style, "Jewels" (set to the music of Fauré, Stravinsky, and Tchaikovsky), and Peter Martins's somewhat cold interpretation of "Romeo and Juliet" (with its full-blooded score by Prokofiev), from last year. A mixed bill combines Balanchine's bravura Verdi fantasy "Ballo Della Regina" with Christopher Wheeldon's mysterious pas de deux "Liturgy," the infectious classic "Fancy Free" by Jerome Robbins, and Peter Martins's homage to eighteenth-century masculinity, "Les Gentilhommes." Casts are announced on the company's Web site a week in advance. ♦ Jan. 9 at 2 and 7:30, Jan. 12 at 2, Jan. 13 at 3, and Jan. 15 at 7:30: "Romeo + Juliet." ♦ Jan. 10 at 8: "Ballo Della Regina," "Liturgy," "Les Gentilhommes," and "Fancy Free." ♦ Jan. 11-12 at 8: "Jewels." (New York State Theatre, Lincoln Center. 212-721-6500. Through Feb. 24.)

PARSONS DANCE

David Parsons looks back over twenty-plus years of his development as a choreographer and a popular success. (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 212-242-0800. Jan. 8-9 at 7:30, Jan.

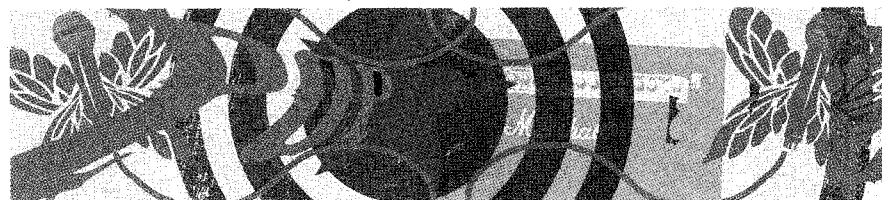
10-11 and Jan. 15 at 8, Jan. 12 at 2 and 8, and Jan. 13 at 2 and 7:30. Through Jan. 20.)

ANDREW J. NEMR AND CPD PLUS

Of the generation of tap dancers that has emerged in the wake of Savion Glover, Nemr is one of the most musical. The rare distinction of his new concert, "Where the Music Lives," lies in the integration between Nemr, his crackerjack ensemble of young dancers, and a seven-piece band. Tunes by Cole Porter, Joseph Zawinul, and Prince get fresh, hip arrangements by Nemr and his musical director, Tommy James (a longtime associate of Glover), and in an age when most hoofers cram in as many notes as possible Nemr lets his rhythms breathe and his taps sing. (Julia Miles, 424 W. 55th St. 212-239-6200. Jan. 9-11 at 8, Jan. 12 at 3 and 8, and Jan. 13 at 2.)

THE COIL FESTIVAL

P.S. 122's annual sampler brings back Maria Hasabí's "Gloria," in which the choreographer and the compelling Hristoula Harakas perform overlapping solos to the sound of traffic, and John Moran's unclassifiable "What If Saori Had a Party." In addition, Degani Shemy, a New York-based Israeli choreographer of the awkward and obsessive school, premieres "Iodine," a fragmented nightmare for an all-female ensemble. (150 First Ave., at 9th St. 212-352-3101. Jan. 9-20. For a complete schedule, visit www.ps122.org.)



JAZZ NOTES BEST OF 2007

Ruby Braff and the Flying Pizzarellis, "C'est Magnifique" (Arbors)—Guitars always brought out the best in the cornettist, who died in 2003, and on this, his final studio recording, he was joined by both Bucky and John Pizzarelli. Braff's warm, velvety sound and knack for melodious improvisation are evident throughout the album.

Freddy Cole, "Music Maestro Please" (HighNote)—Cole, the younger brother of Nat King Cole, is the most assured of old-school singers, but even he benefits from the expert support of a great piano trio. That is just what Bill Charlap's ensemble delivers, complementing Cole's relaxed swing and heart-on-his-sleeve expressiveness.

Marty Ehrlich and Myra Melford, "Spark" (Palmetto)—On their second duet recording, the new-jazz veterans Ehrlich (on saxophone and clarinet) and Melford (on piano) continue to make beautifully thorny music together. Lyrical, eclectic, and adventurous, "Spark" documents a winning and, one hopes evolving, partnership.

Herbie Hancock, "River: The Joni Letters" (Verve)—Herbie loves Joni Mitchell, but he's also got a soft spot for the saxophonist Wayne Shorter. Both giants get their due on this intriguing and often inspired experiment in recontextualizing Mitchell's work. A guest appearance by Mitchell herself, Hancock's accommodating playing, and Shorter's solos are highlights.

Keith Jarrett/Gary Peacock/Jack DeJohnette, "My Foolish Heart: Live at Montreux" (ECM)—It's the unexpected moments, including delightful romps through Fats Waller's "Honeysuckle Rose" and "Ain't Misbehavin'," that help this 2001 performance stand out from other exceptional Jarrett trio recordings. There are also beautiful takes on ballads, including the title track.

Charles Mingus Sextet, "Cornell 1964" (Blue Note)—It's tough to go wrong when it comes to live recordings of the Mingus band, especially the incarnation

that featured the resident geniuses Eric Dolphy and Jaki Byard, as well as the underappreciated Johnny Coles and Clifford Jordan. Still, this newly unearthed concert is notable for the ebullience of its often irascible leader.

Paul Motian/Bill Frisell/Joe Lovano, "Time and Time Again" (ECM)—This idiosyncratic drums-saxophone-and-guitar unit is on a roll that few contemporary bands can keep up with. The material—arresting Motian originals mingling with jazz and popular standards—is familiar, but the chemistry between Motian, Frisell, and Lovano, more than twenty years in the making, insures that nothing is ever routine.

Nicki Parrott and Rossano Sportiello, "People Will Say We're in Love" (Arbors)—Parrott is an exceptional bassist and an endearingly modest singer; Sportiello an adroit pianist with telepathic reflexes. Together, they add sparkle to well-trodden standards and awaken such worthy sleepers as Johnny Hodges's "You Blew Out the Flame in My Heart" and Tom McIntosh's "The Cup Bearers."

Carol Sloane, "Dearest Duke" (Arbors)—There's no place for Sloane to hide on this intimate set, and that works out just fine for this underrated veteran singer. Accompanied only by piano and Ken Peplowski's clarinet and saxophone, Sloane glides over imperishable Ellington ballads, treating each with the blend of delicacy and solidity that only a skilled vocalist can conjure. It's minimalist magic.

John Surman, "The Spaces in Between" (ECM)—Surman may be best known for playing the least sexy member of the saxophone family—the baritone—yet the sound this British jazz legend obtains from the often ungainly horn is ravishing. Supported by a string quartet and the outstanding bassist Chris Laurence, Surman (also no slouch on soprano saxophone) serves up another moody masterwork.

—Steve Futterman

CEDAR LAKE CONTEMPORARY BALLET

The unusually well-funded Chelsea-based troupe brings pieces from Europe and Canada, reprising the work of one William Forsythe disciple ("Symptoms of Development," by the Italian-born Jacopo Godani) and premiering the work of another ("Ten Duets on a Theme of Rescue," by Crystal Pite, of Vancouver). From the Belgian choreographer Stijn Celis, the company imports yet one more "Rite of Spring." On Jan. 13, last year's staging of Ohad Naharin's "Decadance," a successful experiment in a different direction, returns for a single, precious night. (Cedar Lake, 547 W. 26th St. 212-868-4444. Jan. 10-14 at 8. Through Jan. 19.)

ROSEANNE SPRADLIN / VICKY SHICK / MIGUEL GUTIERREZ

Dance Theatre Workshop remounts three standout works from the past two years. In RoseAnne Spradlin's disturbing "Survive Cycle," a quartet of dancers come down with a bad case of the jitters and start snipping each other's clothing to shreds. In Vicky Shick's "Plum House (A Cartoon)," five women inhabit a delicate dream world and a flimsy house not big enough to fit them all. And in Miguel Gutierrez's curiously uplifting "Everyone" the ensemble passes movement phrases around, shares a monologue, trades clothing, and sings in harmony; it's experimental dance with a big heart, and quite worthy of a reprise. (219 W. 19th St. 212-924-0077. Spradlin: Jan. 11 at 4:30 and 7:30. Shick: Jan. 12 at 4:30 and 7:30. Gutierrez: Jan. 14 at 7:30 and Jan. 15 at 4:30 and 7:30.)

JAPANESE CONTEMPORARY DANCE SHOWCASE

The Japan Society's unparalleled annual window onto the Japanese dance scene now includes Yong-In Lee, a soloist from Korea, and Sun-Shier Dance Theatre, an ensemble from Taiwan founded by former members of Cloud Gate Dance Theatre. Yun Myung Fee, born and raised in Tokyo, draws on her Korean heritage in the solo "Love Affairs and Canaries." The Japanese companies Makotochuv and Kingyo also make their United States debuts, the latter performing a work inspired by "Don Quixote." (333 E. 47th St. 212-715-1258. Jan. 11-12 at 7:30.)

MERCE CUNNINGHAM DANCE COMPANY

In the second of eight one-of-a-kind Cunningham "events" at the Dia:Beacon, the ever-inventive choreographer, his awe-inspiring dancers, and four composer/musicians (George Lewis, Fast Forward, Zeena Parkins, and John King) will come together in a gallery housing Walter de Maria's spare study in proportion and perspective "Equal Area Series," for two space-and-mind-altering performances. (Beacon, N.Y. 845-440-0100, ext. 45. Jan. 12-13 at 2.)

MOISEYEV DANCE COMPANY

Igor Moiseyev died last November, at the age of a hundred and one, but the unsurpassed folkloric company he founded soldiers on without him. Sixty-five strong, the troupe brings its customary verve and theatrical amplification to dances from Russia and its neighbors, and also from Greece, Spain, Romania, Egypt, Venezuela, and Argentina, incarnating cowboys, Gypsies, and sailors along the way. (Walt Whitman Theatre, Brooklyn Center for the Performing Arts, Brooklyn College. 718-951-4500. Jan. 12 at 8.)

"WORKS & PROCESS"

The Guggenheim hosts the ninety-three-year-old dancer Frederic Franklin, his biographer, Leslie Norton, and dancers from the American Ballet Theatre (Julie Kent and David Hallberg), ABT II, and the Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis School, to talk about Franklin's life and to perform roles he created and staged. (Fifth Ave. at 89th St. 212-423-3587. Jan. 13-14 at 7:30.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC OPERA

METROPOLITAN OPERA

Adrian Noble's all too clever modern-dress production of "Macbeth," which first bowed in October, keeps popping up at the Met, Banquo's ghost and all. (The Thane's rule will end in May.)



"27 Dresses," directed by Anne Fletcher and starring Katherine Heigl, opens Jan. 11.

Verdi's opera does have an elemental, granitic power, of course, and with a cast that features such singers as Maria Guleghina, Lado Ataneli, and John Relyea it's certainly worth hearing; James Levine conducts. (Jan. 9 at 8 and Jan. 12 at 1:30.) ♦ With the formidable Andrea Gruber replacing Guleghina. (Jan. 15 at 8.) ♦ Richard Jones's production of Humperdinck's "Hansel and Gretel" is a tale told in three kitchens, one for each act; the siblings stumble through states of hunger, delirium, and gluttony in settings that proceed from realism to Expressionism to the theatre of the absurd. The results are impressively executed, whether the "Be Our Guest"-like dream sequence or the Witch's kitchen-as-torture-chamber finale. The exciting cast includes not only Alice Coote and Christine Schäfer in the title roles but also the veteran tenor Philip Langridge—the only singer who doesn't make mincemeat out of David Pountney's English translation—as the Witch; Vladimir Jurowski's conducting balances the score's folk-opera (sweet) and Wagnerian (savory) elements. (Jan. 11 at 7:30.) ♦ Bartlett Sher's vivacious production of "Il Barbiere di Siviglia," which debuted in 2006, was one of the theatrical delights that graced the first season of the Peter Gelb regime. It returns for ten performances with a new cast that features an eagerly awaited debut from the Latvian mezzo-soprano Elina Garanča, in the role of Rosina. Also with José Manuel Zapata and Franco Vassallo; Frédéric Chaslin. (Jan. 12 at 8:30.) ♦ The nineteen-eighties may have belonged to Al Franken, but the aughts have been Lorin Maazel's. In 2000, he returned to the New York Philharmonic after an absence of twenty-three years to conduct "The Ring Without Words," his compact arrangement of Wagner's four evening-length operas; it went over so well that the orchestra made him its next music director. Now, after an even longer time away (some forty-five years), he crosses the plaza to lead the same composer's "Die Walküre" (words included). The impressive cast features Lisa Gasteen, Adrienne Pie-

czonka, Stephanie Blythe, and James Morris. (Jan. 14 at 6:30.) (Metropolitan Opera House. 212-362-6000.)

NEW YORK GILBERT & SULLIVAN PLAYERS
Once upon a time, joy and rapture echoed across Manhattan, but nowadays the only professional ensemble touting the Savoy Operas is the conductor Albert Bergeret's invaluable group. A double bill of "Trial by Jury" and "G&S à la Carte," a revue, begins the company's second week of winter shows; it returns to City Center in June. (Jan. 10 at 8.) ♦ The ever-popular "Pirates of Penzance" follows close on its heels. (Jan. 11 at 8 and Jan. 13 at 3.) ♦ "The Mikado," perhaps the loveliest of the bunch, is also included, for one performance only. (Jan. 12 at 2.) ♦ There's also "Princess Ida," a semi-rarity from 1884. (Jan. 12 at 8.) (131 W. 55th St. 212-581-1212.)

AMATO OPERA: "LA BOHÈME"
Puccini's timeless Latin Quarter romance is offered at an appropriately intimate venue, Anthony Amato's charming shoebox theatre in the East Village. (Amato Opera Theatre, 319 Bowery, at 2nd St. 212-228-8200. Jan. 12 at 7:30 and Jan. 13 at 2:30. These are the final performances.)

ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC
The mezzo-soprano Susan Graham is living in ancient times. Fresh from her triumph at the Metropolitan Opera in the title role of Gluck's "Iphigénie en Tauride," she comes to Avery Fisher Hall to offer another impassioned French-language portrait, Berlioz's *scène lyrique* "La Mort de Cléopâtre." Lorin Maazel, mixing his Philharmonic and Met duties this week, conducts the program, which also features Berlioz's "Benvenuto Cellini" Overture, along with Prokofiev's Symphony No. 7 and "Scythian Suite." (212-875-5656. Jan. 10 at 7:30 and Jan. 11-12 at 8.)

MUSIC AT THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM: GREEK BYZANTINE CHOIR

The long-established group from Athens performs ageless chant-based works from the Greek Orthodox tradition in the evocative setting of the Temple of Dendur. (Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. 212-570-3949. Jan. 13 at 7.)

RECITALS

LARK CHAMBER ARTISTS

Memo: the Lark Quartet, an all-female group that has maintained a strong profile in new music, has transformed itself into an ensemble of mixed instruments (and genders). Its debut concert—featuring such distinguished guests as the violist Lawrence Dutton, the pianist Gary Graffman, and the Ethos Percussion Quartet—is a diverse affair featuring music by Brahms, John Adams ("John's Book of Alleged Dances"), Jennifer Higdon, Giovanni Sollima (a première), and Mohamed Abdul Wahab. (Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St. 212-501-3330. Jan. 10 at 8.)

BARGEMUSIC

Russian masterworks dominate the floating chamber-music series this week, with the violinist Mark Peskanov in charge. Jan. 11 at 8 and Jan. 13 at 4: Piano trios by Shostakovich and Arensky (No. 1 in D Minor) are preceded by Bach's Sonata in G Minor for Solo Violin. ♦ Jan. 12 at 8: Brahms's Scherzo for Violin and Piano, WoO 2, is an amuse-bouche for Shostakovich's limpid Sonata for Cello and Piano (featuring the cellist Ani Kalayjian) and Tchaikovsky's commanding Piano Trio (with the pianist Doris Stevenson). (Fulton Ferry Landing. 718-624-2083.)

ROBERT BURKHART AND BLAIR MCMILLEN

The adventurous young cellist teams up with a major new-music pianist for a recital at the Rose Studio that features Carter's magnificent Sonata from 1948 and a new work by Andrew Waggoner, with Debussy's Sonata in between. (Rose Studio, Lincoln Center. Jan. 12 at 8. Tickets at the door.)

NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC ENSEMBLES

Several of the orchestra's virtuosos (including the violist Rebecca Young, the cellist Eric Bartlett, and two guest pianists, Helen Huang and Elena Lisitsian) gather to perform music by Mozart, Schumann (the Piano Quartet), Fred Lerdahl, and Frank Martin. (Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St. 212-501-3330. Jan. 13 at 3.)

CHRISTINE SCHÄFER:

"WINTERREISE"

The lithe and knowing German soprano, with the pianist Eric Schneider, goes where few females dare to tread: Schubert's brooding late cycle, usually the preserve of male singers. (Rose Theatre, Lincoln Center. 212-721-6500. Jan. 13 at 5.)

CHAMBER MUSIC SOCIETY OF LINCOLN CENTER

The bassist and composer Edgar Meyer joins four pairs of woodwind colleagues (including the clarinetists David Shifrin and Jose Franch-Ballester and the bassoonists Milan Turkovic and Peter Kol-kay) for the New York première of his Serenade for Double Bass and Wind Octet in a concert that also offers performances of Mozart's Serenades for Winds in C Minor and E-Flat Major. (New York Society for Ethical Culture, 2 W. 64th St. 212-875-5788. Jan. 13 at 5 and Jan. 15 at 7:30.)

RADU LUPU

The magisterial pianist offers two beloved works—Schubert's Sonata in D Major, D. 850, and Book I of Debussy's "Préludes"—in his Carnegie Hall recital. (212-247-7800. Jan. 14 at 8.)

MARK PADMORE:

"WINTERREISE"

A male duo takes back Schubert's masterwork two days later, but the pairing is unconventional to the point of provocation: Padmore has made his considerable reputation singing pre-Romantic music, while his accompanist, Ethan Iverson, is famous as the pianist for the impetuous indie-jazz trio the Bad Plus. Who knows what might happen? (Weill Recital Hall, Carnegie Hall. 212-247-7800. Jan. 15 at 8.)

CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK LONG STORY

From its long opening shot, a neon-infused homage to the start of "Touch of Evil," Paul Thomas Anderson's "Boogie Nights," released in 1997, was a gleaming declaration of intent. The young director had deliberately taken as low and scuzzy a tale as you could wish for—the progress of a stud (Mark Wahlberg) through the San Fernando Valley pornography trade in the nineteen-seventies and eighties—and treated it with



the high, humane style that we associate with masters of elaboration like Altman and Welles. No wonder the cast—comically rich, with names like Don Cheadle, William H. Macy, Julianne Moore, and Philip Seymour Hoffman—flocked to Anderson's call. (And who would have predicted that the wink-and-leer charm of Burt Reynolds could be tamed into grace and restraint?) Placed next to his new epic, "There Will Be Blood," the earlier film, which screens at Sunshine Cinema on Jan. 11-12, still seems the finer achievement—less driven and oil-dark, but far more various and wistful, and no less acute in its survey of American ambition, even if the hero's dreams reach no further than the foot of the bed.

—Anthony Lane

MOVIES OPENING

THE BUSINESS OF BEING BORN

A documentary by Abby Epstein about the American way of childbirth. Opening Jan. 9. (IFC Center.)

FIRST SUNDAY

Ice Cube and Tracy Morgan star in this crime comedy, about two lowlives who rob a church. Directed by David E. Talbert. Opening Jan. 11. (In wide release.)

TIMES AND WINDS

Reha Erdem directed this coming-of-age story, set in a remote Turkish village. In Turkish. Opening Jan. 11. (Anthology Film Archives.)

27 DRESSES

A romantic comedy about a woman (Katherine Heigl) who falls in love with her sister's fiancé (James Marsden). Written by Aline Brosh McKenna and directed by Anne Fletcher. Opening Jan. 11. (In wide release.)

WOMAN ON THE BEACH

Reviewed below in Now Playing. Opening Jan. 9. (Film Forum.)

NOW PLAYING

THE BUCKET LIST

A comedy about two terminal cancer patients cutting a rug. Jack Nicholson, bulgy-eyed, heavy-bellied, and super-emphatic, is a crass and rancorous billionaire; Morgan Freeman, wise, compassionate, baritone, and eloquent, is an intellectual who was forced by family obligations to become an auto mechanic. They strike up a friendship of sorts in a Los Angeles hospital and make up a list of wild and crazy things to do before they kick off. Jumping out of airplanes, playing bumper cars in Shelby GT350s on an empty track, and visiting the pyramids and the Himalayas top the fun. Little lessons about life are doled out, mainly by Freeman, before, mercifully, the end comes. Written, shamelessly, by Justin Zackham, and directed by Rob Reiner.—David Denby (Reviewed in our issue of 1/7/08.) (In wide release.)

CHARLIE WILSON'S WAR

The new Mike Nichols film is a mixed bag: suave and zippy in the matter of Charlie Wilson (Tom Hanks) himself, the good-time congressman who channelled funds, guns, and moral support to the Afghans in their fight against the Soviet Union, but flip and slapdash when it comes to war itself. George Crile's book was adapted for the screen by Aaron Sorkin, and the scenes of office politics—especially those in which Wilson jousts with Gust Avrakotos (Philip Seymour Hoffman), the bullish C.I.A. agent who runs the operation—are fluent, combative, and entertainingly distant from the drabness of actual politics. Hoffman pretty much strides away with the movie, leaving even Julia Roberts, in her role as a Texan society hostess, looking a little beached. The closer the story draws to front-line combat, where Wilson's noble schemes come to fruition, the weaker and more embarrassing it grows; once again, like it or not, Nichols has proved himself to be a connoisseur of closed worlds.—Anthony Lane (12/24 & 31/07) (In wide release.)

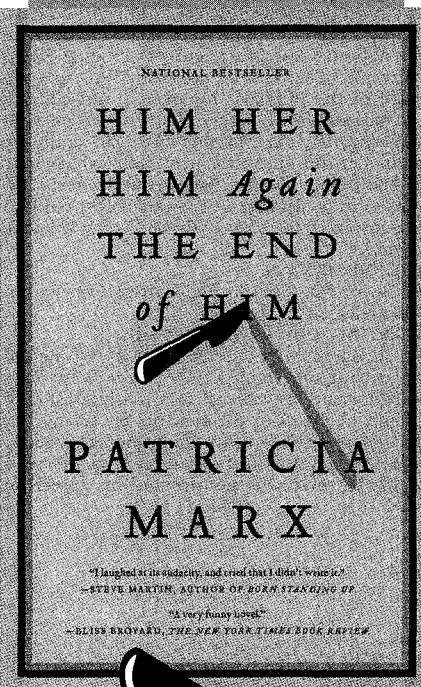
HONEYDRIPPER

John Sayles's new movie is set in rural Alabama in 1950, at harvesttime, and most of it takes place in an old, bare, wood-plank jazz club, the Honeydrinker Lounge, situated near the cotton fields and presided over by one Pine Top Purvis (Danny Glover), a retired boogie-woogie piano player who is running out of cash. Pine Top engages a famous jazz guitarist from New Orleans, but when the genius doesn't show he substitutes a mere boy (Gary Clark, Jr.), who miraculously brings the place alive with an electric guitar. So many different performance styles (including blues, gospel, and rockabilly) pass through the movie that it becomes a kind of history of black

THE NATIONAL
BESTSELLER—NOW IN
PAPERBACK

"I laughed at its
audacity, and cried
that I didn't write it."

—Steve Martin, author of
Born Standing Up



"A very
funny novel."

—The New York Times
Book Review

"A wildly funny sad
book. Or a wildly
sad funny book."

—O, The Oprah
Magazine

"Dark hilarity. Marx
has a lovely, belly-up-
to-the-bar humor."

—Los Angeles
Times

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music in America, leading up to Sayles's mythic depiction of the birth of rock and roll. Keb' Mo' is the blind angel who sits around on the street playing the blues and making sardonic remarks. With Charles S. Dutton, Mable John, and Stacy Keach as a mean, racist white sheriff who lacks any real power—he has no music.—*D.D.* (1/7/08) (Cinema Village.)

**NATIONAL TREASURE:
BOOK OF SECRETS**

Nicolas Cage teams up again with his wise-cracking sidekick Justin Bartha (doing his best Steve Zahn imitation) in the director Jon Turteltaub's clue-chasing sequel to their 2004 hit. This time Cage and Bartha follow thin threads of plausibility to locate a top-secret historical document, passed down by former Presidents, that exposes dark intrigues that could shake the nation. Some great actors (including Helen Mirren and Ed Harris) are trotted out as each piece of the puzzle is discovered and adds to the unbelievable high jinks. There's enough shouting, map questing, and historical-landmark scaling to fill an amusement ride, which may be the point. The film takes American history, puts it in a blender, and serves it like pabulum to conspiracy theorists.—*Bruce Diones* (In wide release.)

THE ORPHANAGE

Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. (In wide release.)

STARTING OUT IN THE EVENING

Amid dark-stained bookcases in a funereal apartment on Manhattan's Upper West Side, the once famous writer Leonard Schiller (Frank Langella) taps out a novel on his typewriter and tries to fend off an ambitious and needy female graduate student (Lauren Ambrose) who wants to revive his sex life and his career. In

this well-intentioned but threadbare independent film, the director Andrew Wagner delineates Schiller's relations with the student and also with his wayward daughter (Lili Taylor) with some delicacy—perhaps too much delicacy. Schiller is meant to be a survivor of the New York Jewish literary renaissance of the fifties and sixties, but the movie dries out Schiller's temperament far too much. Anyone who has met members of that vanished tribe of New Yorkers knows that, even in their later years, they made a joke now and then and were given to malice and desire as well as to bouts of intellectual severity. Schiller's austere ironies wilt one's interest in him, but within this narrow conception Frank Langella is superb.—*D.D.* (1/7/08) (In wide release.)

SWEENEY TODD

In many ways, Tim Burton should be the ideal director to bring Stephen Sondheim's triumphant musical to the screen. The maker of "Edward Scissorhands" and "Sleepy Hollow" has repeatedly shown that he has a stomach for the bizarre and a sweet tooth for blood—or, at any rate, for displays of bright red. His regular muse, Johnny Depp, with his air of adventurous freakiness, seems equally primed for the part of Sweeney—the London barber who slashes the throats of customers and grinds the bodies up to fill the pies of Mrs. Lovett (Helena Bonham Carter) down below. All the more surprising, then, that the result of their collaboration should too often feel thin and cramped. Even with an arsenal of razors at hand, Sweeney comes across as more of a misfit than a murderer, and the romantic subplot, about a pair of star-crossed lovers (Jamie Campbell Bower and Jayne Wisener), verges on the twee. The best performances come from Alan Rickman,

as the vulpine Judge Turpin (who alone brings a sexual frisson to the film), and Ed Sanders, both vital and solemn, as Mrs. Lovett's assistant. The songs are delivered lustily, although audiences may not be ready for what is, in effect, a murky comic opera.—*A.L.* (12/24 & 31/07) (In wide release.)

THERE WILL BE BLOOD

This enthralling and powerfully eccentric American epic, written and directed by Paul Thomas Anderson (adapting Upton Sinclair's garrulous 1927 novel, "Oil!"), covers a thirty-year span in the life of Daniel Plainview (Daniel Day-Lewis), who begins as a lonely silver miner in 1898 and winds up as one of the richest, and craziest, tycoons in early-twentieth-century California. Much of the first part of the movie is given over to raptly silent passages of physical effort—men lifting, hauling, pounding, wordlessly working in the muck and viscous slime. The film is about the driving force of capitalism as it both creates and destroys the future, and its tone is at once exhilarated and sickened. Day-Lewis lowers his chin slightly, and his dark eyes dance with merriment as he speaks in full, coarse, and rounded tones. It is the voice of dominating commercial logic, an American force of nature. Plainview's great antagonist is a young man, Eli Sunday (Paul Dano), who thinks he has the word of God within him, and who creates, in the oil fields, the revivalist Church of the Third Revelation. Anderson has set up a kind of allegory of development, in which the two overwhelming forces—entrepreneurial capitalism and evangelism—build Southern California together and then, inevitably, fall into combat. Their final confrontation goes as far over the top as one of Plainview's gushing wells.—*D.D.* (12/17/07) (In limited release.)



WALK HARD: THE DEWEY COX STORY

An uneven spoof of music bio-pics (especially "Walk the Line"), with John C. Reilly playing a hapless dolt who rises to the top by imitating every popular style at exactly the right moment, from Elvis to Dylan to the Fab Four. In India, Dewey encounters the Beatles dropping acid and sitting in lotus position with the Maharishi. Jack Black (Paul McCartney), Paul Rudd (John Lennon), Justin Long (George Harrison), and Jason Schwartzman (Ringo Starr) do Liverpudlian with hilarious inflections—it's just a single scene, but it's the funniest thing in the movie. Apart from Christopher Guest's mock documentaries, this kind of parody of a tired genre probably works best as a sketch. "Walk Hard" runs down pretty quickly and suffers from having Reilly, who isn't charismatic or funny enough to hold the picture together, at its center. One waits for the few good bits, which include a parody of Dylan's long-lined, strangled-poetry lyrics. With Jenna Fischer. Written by Jake Kasdan and Judd Apatow. Directed by Kasdan.—D.D. (1/7/08) (In wide release.)

WOMAN ON THE BEACH

Hong Sang-soo's expansive, tender melodrama is also one of the recent cinema's deepest portraits of an artist. Jung-rae, a filmmaker who is having trouble writing a script, cajoles his assistant, Chang-wook, into driving him from Seoul to a desolate seaside resort. Chang-wook has a date with his girlfriend, Mun-suk, but the writer-director persuades him to bring her along for the ride. The ensuing complication is inevitable; but despite Jung-rae's growing bond with Mun-suk, which liberates his artistic imagination, she is not the only woman on the beach. Hong delineates the exquisitely calibrated intimacy and cruelty of these relationships with a self-

deprecating sincerity. His airy, unhurried images let a maximum of reality rush in. The characters' headlong leap toward mingled joy and pain suggests a vulnerability and a hunger for experience that are themselves a lesson in art: the intense, conflicting emotions are the creator's raw material, and the depiction of the avidly searching filmmaker is a persuasive self-portrait of Hong himself. In Korean.—Richard Brody (Film Forum.)

ZVENIGORA

Alexander Dovzhenko's mythopoetic rhapsody, from 1928, follows an ageless grandfather (Nikolai Nademsky) in his centuries-long quest to unearth buried treasure, symbolizing Ukrainian identity, which lies hidden in the "ringing mountain" of the title. Dovzhenko's vast, fantastic view of history—running from the Cossacks' primeval clashes with Poles hiding in trees through the redemptive industrialization of the Bolshevik regime—may suggest the Soviet-style lockstep of progress, but his visionary hysteria hints at immutable depths of the soul. Dovzhenko depicts such ardent figures as a crazed monk who looms over the embattled forests, maidens at their riverside rite, and two grandsons with divergent paths (the ineffectual nationalist and the rationalist revolutionary) with a spontaneous sympathy for their diverse forms of zealotry. His wide array of attention-grabbing devices, including double exposures, watery reflections, subliminally rapid-fire editing, and stark, high-contrast graphics, conjure a world of fantasy and ecstasy unfathomed by the stiffly arrayed ranks of revolutionaries who make their dutiful appearance. A magical finale of whizbang theatrics and modernist irony is far more ambivalent than the overseers imagined. Silent.—R.B. (Anthology Film Archives; Jan. 13.)

Also Playing

ALVIN AND THE CHIPMUNKS: In wide release.
JUNO: In wide release (12/17/07). **A WALK INTO THE SEA:** Cinema Village.

REVIVALS, CLASSICS, ETC.

Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.

ANTHOLOGY FILM ARCHIVES

32 Second Ave., at 2nd St. (212-505-5181)—"Essential Cinema." Jan. 12 at 6: "Rien Que les Heures" (1926, Alberto Cavalcanti; silent) and "Symphonie Diagonale" (1924, Viking Eggeling; silent). ♦ Jan. 13 at 6: "Zvenigora" (†). ♦ Jan. 13 at 8: "Arsenal" (1928-29, Alexander Dovzhenko; silent).

FILM FORUM

W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (212-727-8110)—The films of Otto Preminger. Jan. 9 at 1:30, 5:25, and 9:20: "Saint Joan" (1957). ♦ Jan. 9 at 3:35 and 7:30: "Bonjour Tristesse" (1958). ♦ Jan. 10 at 1, 3:10, 5:20, 7:30, and 10: "Bunny Lake Is Missing" (1965). ♦ Jan. 11 at 1, 4:45, and 8:30: "Carmen Jones" (1954). ♦ Jan. 11 at 3, 6:45, and 10:30: "River of No Return" (1954). ♦ Jan. 12 at 1:20, 4, 6:40, and 9:20: "Advise & Consent" (1962). ♦ Jan. 13 at 2 and 7: "Exodus" (1960). The 2 P.M. screening will be introduced by Preminger's biographer Foster Hirsch. ♦ Jan. 14 at 1, 5:10, and 9:20: "Under Your Spell" (1936). ♦ Jan. 14 at 2:15, 6:25, and 10:35: "In the Meantime, Darling" (1944). ♦ Jan. 14 at 3:40 and 7:50: "Margin for Error" (1943). ♦ Jan. 15 at 1, 5:10, and 9:05: "Forever Amber" (1947). ♦ Jan. 15 at 3:35 and 7:30: "The Fan" (1949). The 7:30 screening will be introduced by Hirsch.



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FRENCH INSTITUTE ALLIANCE FRANÇAISE
Florence Gould Hall, 55 E. 59th St. (212-355-6160)—The films of Patrice Leconte. Jan. 15 at 12:30, 4, and 7:30: "Monsieur Hire" (1989; in French).

IFC CENTER

323 Sixth Ave., at W. 3rd St. (212-924-7771)—In revival. Through Jan. 15 (call for showtimes): "Fanny and Alexander," the original, complete version (1982, Ingmar Bergman).

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (212-708-9480)—The films of Goran Paskaljević. All films are in Serbo-Croatian. Jan. 9 at 7 and Jan. 12 at 2: "Beach Guard in Winter" (1976). ♦ Jan. 10 at 6:15 and Jan. 13 at 2: "Midwinter Night's Dream" (2004). ♦ Jan. 11 at 6:15 and Jan. 12 at 4:30: "The Dog Who Loved Trains" (1977). ♦ Jan. 11 at 8:15 and Jan. 13 at 5: "The Powder Keg/Cabaret Balkan" (1998). ♦ Special screening. Jan. 14 at 6:15: "Quadrille" (1938, Sacha Guitry; in French), introduced by the chairman of Gaumont, Nicolas Seydoux.

MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE

35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (718-784-0077)—"Ford at Fox." Jan. 12 at 3: "Just Pals" (1920; silent). ♦ Jan. 12 at 5: "The Iron Horse" (1924; silent). ♦ Jan. 13 at 2:30: "Four Sons" (1928; silent). ♦ Jan. 13 at 5: "Pilgrimage" (1933).

SUNSHINE CINEMA

143 E. Houston St. (212-330-8182)—"Sunshine@Midnight." Jan. 11-12: "Boogie Nights" (1997, Paul Thomas Anderson).

WALTER READE THEATRE

Lincoln Center (212-875-5600)—The New York Jewish Film Festival. ♦ Jan. 9 at 3:45 and Jan. 14 at 8:30: "Tehilim" (2007, Raphael Nadjari). ♦ Jan. 9 at 9: "A Secret" (2007, Claude Miller; in

French). ♦ Jan. 10 at 1: "The Champagne Sky" (2007, Nadav Schirman). ♦ Jan. 10 at 6: "An Orthodox Stance" (2007, Jason Hutt). ♦ Jan. 12 at 6: "Beaufort" (2007, Joseph Cedar; in Hebrew). ♦ Jan. 13 at 1: "Love One Another" (1922, Carl Theodor Dreyer; silent). ♦ Jan. 13 at 6: "Two Ladies" (2007, Philippe Faucon; in French).

READINGS AND TALKS

KINOKUNIYA BOOKSTORE

The spoken-word artist and author Barry Yourgrau recently branched out into writing his very short stories for consumption on cell phones in Japan, where *keitai* fiction, which takes its name from the Japanese word for "cell phone" (on which it is often written as well as read), is the hottest thing since the invention of haiku. On Jan. 9 at 6, he visits this Japanese bookstore to read from his work in the genre. (Sixth Ave. between 40th and 41st Sts. No tickets necessary.)

"BROOKLYN WAS MINE"

Susan Choi, Jennifer Egan, and Darin Strauss read from their contributions to a newly published anthology of essays about life in Kings County. (Barnes & Noble, Seventh Ave. at 6th St., Brooklyn. Jan. 9 at 7:30. No tickets necessary.)

"SECRET SCIENCE CLUB"

The monthly lecture series in the basement of the Union Hall bar returns with the astrophysicist David Spergel, who will talk about the state of the cosmos. (702 Union St., Park Slope, Brooklyn. 718-638-4400. Jan. 9 at 8.)

KGB BAR

The Writers Studio faculty members Joel Hinman, Therese Eiben, Lucinda Holt, and Michele Herman read from their work. (85 E. 4th St. Jan. 13 at 7. No tickets necessary.)

THREE LIVES & COMPANY

Joseph Caldwell offers selections from "The Pig Did It," his novel about an American's misadventures in Ireland. (154 W. 10th St. No tickets necessary. Jan. 15 at 7.)

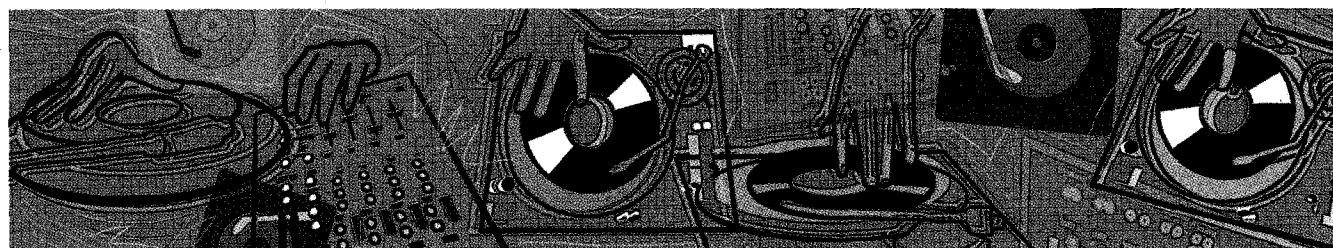
ABOVE AND BEYOND

BIG APPLE CIRCUS

Manhattan's homegrown one-ring wonder is marking its thirtieth anniversary with a show titled "Celebrate!" (Damosch Park, Lincoln Center. For more information, call 800-922-3772, or visit www.bigapplecircus.org. Through Jan. 13.)

SYMPHONY SPACE

The cultural heart of the Upper West Side is also turning thirty, and it's having a birthday party on Jan. 10 at 8. The Irish actress Fionnula Flanagan and the Tony Award-winning actor Fritz Weaver will serve up a short version of the Space's famous "Bloomsday on Broadway" reading of James Joyce. In addition, the "Saturday Night Live" veteran Jane Curtin will talk about what life was like on the Upper West Side twenty years ago. With sketch comedy by Anne Meara and Jerry Stiller, additional readings by the likes of Frank McCourt and Calvin Trillin, and appearances by the singer Andrea Marcovicci, the ballet dancer Jacques d'Amboise, and the folksinger Theodore Bikel, among others. (Broadway at 95th St. 212-864-5400.)



ON THE HORIZON

**CLASSICAL MUSIC
ABOUT TIME**

Jan. 21

Merkin Concert Hall has recently undergone an extensive renovation. Its reopening is being celebrated with a "Grand Piano Marathon," a program that features works by William Bolcom and Philip Glass, along with a performance of Ligeti's funny and frightening "Poème Symphonique for 100 Metronomes," which is being staged in the hall's lobby. (212-501-3330.)

**MOVIES
EURO TUBE**

Jan. 24-March 8

At the French-German television channel ARTE, the programmer Pierre Chevalier commissioned films from such daring directors as Philippe Garrel, Hal Hartley, Pedro Costa, Chantal Akerman, and Tsai Ming-Liang. MOMA offers thirty of these productions. (212-708-9480.)

**NIGHT LIFE
WITHOUT A NET**

Jan. 26-27

The adventurous sonic alchemists DJ Shadow and Cut Chemist create

entrancing soundscapes from snippets of old funk and soul records. For their show "The Hard Sell," which comes to the Fillmore New York at Irving Plaza, they're using innumerable 45s, eight turntables, and a pair of guitar loop pedals. (212-777-6800.)

**THE THEATRE
SENSATIONAL SHOW**

Jan. 29-30

In an odd bit of programming, Carnegie Hall hosts a concert of the smash hit London musical "Jerry Springer—the Opera," by Richard Thomas and Stewart Lee.

Harvey Keitel stars as the mayor of Cincinnati turned trashy-talk-show host. Jason Moore directs. (212-247-7800.)

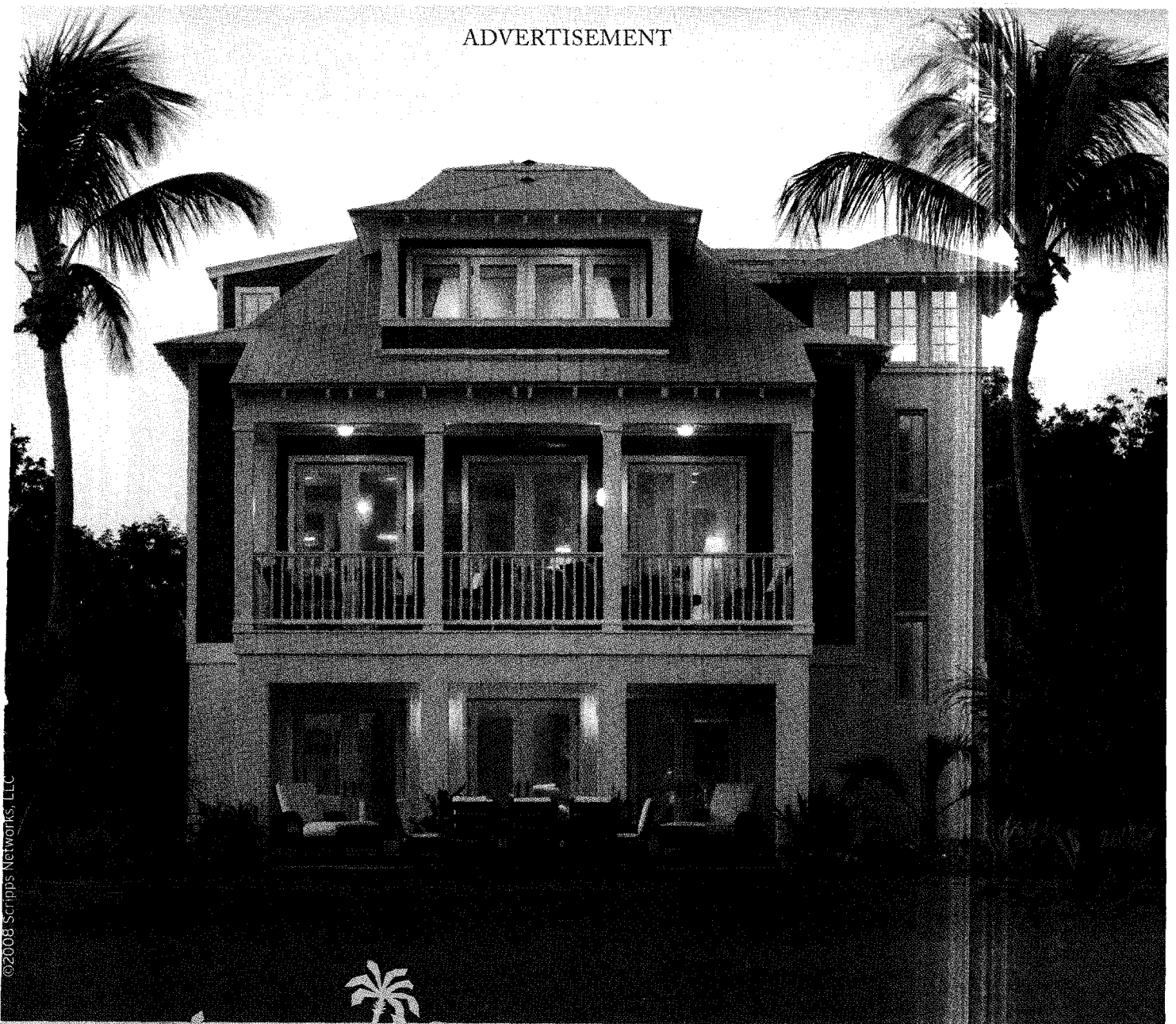
**ART
A WOMAN'S FACE**

Jan. 29-April 27

Who was Antea? Like Leonardo's Mona Lisa, the subject of Parmigianino's haunting portrait remains shrouded in mystery. The Frick will display this Renaissance masterpiece in a single-work show. (212-288-0700.)

DJ Shadow and Cut Chemist, at the Fillmore New York at Irving Plaza.

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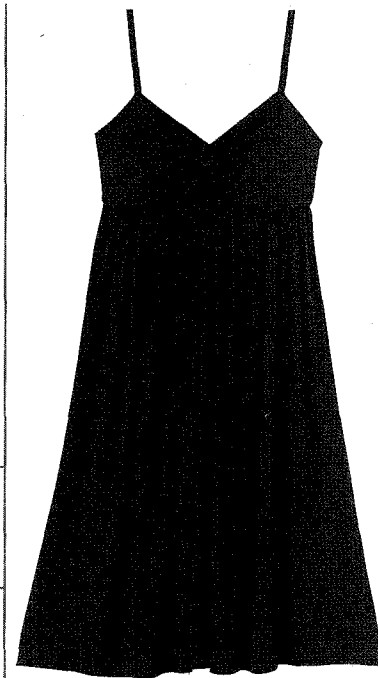


PEDRO GARCIA FOR ULTIMATE CLOSET

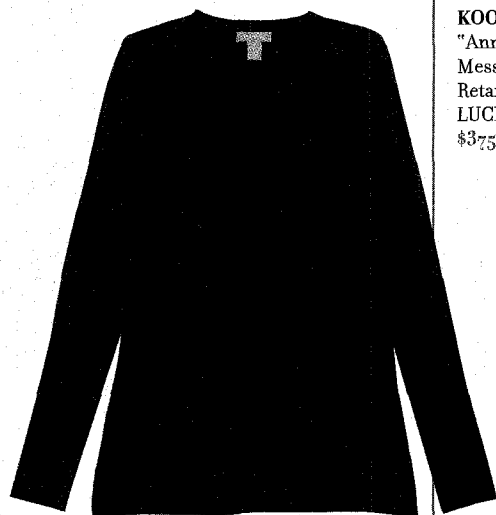
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HAYDEN

Pocket Sweater

Retail: \$275

LUCKY SHOPS: \$129

KOoba

"Annie"

Messenger Bag

Retail: \$625

LUCKY SHOPS:
\$375

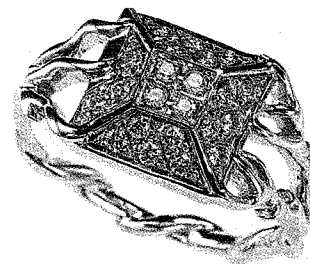


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THE TALK OF THE TOWN

COMMENT WEALTH OF NATIONS



After two thousand five hundred and thirty-nine days of the failed and benighted Administration led by George W. Bush, the victory of Barack Obama in Iowa last Thursday night—and the embracing speech he delivered in Des Moines to celebrate—was a thrillingly hopeful, and potentially transformative, moment in American political life. Obama distinguished himself in a talented field by pulling in young voters who normally disdain the ballot box and Republicans and Independents who normally disdain Democrats, and by offering an increasingly clear vision of a way out of the moral and policy depredations that have brought the national spirit to its lowest ebb in memory. It was no less uplifting, after two centuries of white men in charge, to see Hillary Clinton, who is hardly done campaigning, give a gracious concession speech to a winner, an African-American, who, as he put it, has “a father from Kenya and a mother from Kansas.”

ILLUSTRATIONS BY TOM BACHTELL

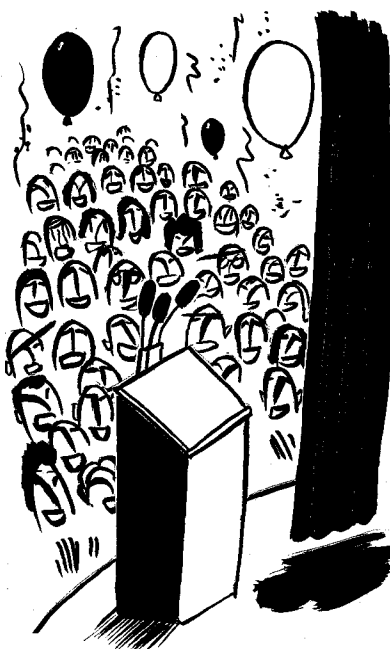
Onto this crowded and rejuvenated political stage now comes Michael Bloomberg, our skilled and uncommonly non-neurotic mayor, engaged in a different variety of the electoral enterprise—a prolonged game of Presidential footsie. Even

as he has issued denials of interest to everyone from the press corps at City Hall to Ryan Seacrest on Dick Clark's New Year's Eve broadcast, Bloomberg has deputized some of his leading aides to draw up scenarios for a third-party candidacy and to keep the interest of the press well fluffed. The press, titillated by access, has cooperated with front-page “would-he, could-he” stories. This week, Bloomberg will attend a meeting of Unity08, in Oklahoma, to discuss third-party options, and in recent weeks he has displayed a vague yet imperious disdain for the assembled candidates, while privately hustling from one policy consultant and policy grandee to the next, to ask, “What chance does a five-foot-seven billionaire

Jew who's divorced really have of becoming President?”

The reason that Bloomberg's coy exploratory venture has earned him such attention is obvious. “There are two things that are important in politics,” Mark Hanna, the Ohio industrialist and senator who ran William McKinley's campaign, in 1896, said. “The first is money and I can't remember what the second one is.” All the front-runners except Mike Huckabee are millionaires to one degree or another—Obama is the poorest, with a net worth of just over a million dollars, Mitt Romney the richest, with two hundred million—but Bloomberg is wealthier by an order of magnitude. According to *Forbes*, he is worth more than eleven billion dollars. Bloomberg owns an estate in Bermuda, a horse farm in Westchester County, a condominium in Vail, a ten-million-dollar town house in London, and a thirteen-and-a-half-million-dollar town house on East Seventy-ninth Street. To commute among them, he takes his private jet, a Falcon 9. He isn't stingy, though; he's one of the leading philanthropists in the United States and has said that at some point he hopes to give away as much as four hundred million dollars a year.

Still, running for President is not cheap. Some press estimates say that Bloomberg would have to spend half a billion dollars to get on the ballots of all fifty states, pay for a staff and commercials, and run an effective national race. Kevin Sheekey, the Mark Hanna of



Bloomberg's non-candidacy candidacy, told *Newsweek* that the number is higher: "If it happens, it's a billion-dollar campaign." Whatever. If Bloomberg feels like it, he can put a Presidential run on his Amex card. His credit is good. And he is experienced in self-financing. In 2001, he invented himself, with a wink, as a Republican, and spent some seventy-four million dollars to overcome Mark Green and rule New York. In 2005, he spent eighty-five million dollars on his reelection campaign: eighty-five million dollars to defeat the juggernaut that was Fernando Ferrer, the Bronx borough president. The *Times* editorial page, which generally supports the Mayor, rightly decreed the amount "obscene."

For the moment, Bloomberg's flirtation with a third-party run is a plutocrat's relatively harmless indulgence of ego and curiosity, but he may get serious. It has happened before. In 1992, the similarly loaded computer-systems executive H. Ross Perot ran a campaign fuelled by more than sixty million dollars of his own fortune. His was a memorable political expedition that featured a spacey ideology of managerialism and nativism and a personality well beyond the bounds of special. Perot won nineteen per cent of the vote and pretty much guaranteed a victory for Bill Clinton, who had deftly appropriated one of Perot's issues: deficit reduction. Third-party races matter. In

2000, the consumer advocate Ralph Nader, another special personality, fulfilled his historical destiny with an anti-corporate, anti-globalization campaign, which insured that the balloting in Florida between Al Gore and George W. Bush was close enough to enable the conservative majority on the Supreme Court to hand the election to the Republicans. Or at least that's the way it worked out.

Bloomberg's confederates say that their man would not dream of running as a spoiler. He is not the quixotic type. If he runs, it will be to win and because the major parties have selected "polarizing" candidates who leave a large part of the electorate cold. Bloomberg's people speak, in particular, of Hillary Clinton's "negatives" and of the right-wing ideologies of Mike Huckabee and Mitt Romney. Sheekey's strategy is to see where the race is after the Texas primary, on March 4th; at that point, Bloomberg can still get on all the ballots and, like so many prevaricators before him—Obama included—will likely be excused his oaths not to run.

Bloomberg's record as mayor has, for the most part, been stellar. Those who contend that he has been the city's best executive since Fiorello LaGuardia have an excellent argument even if he does lack the earthy panache of "the Little Flower." With a style both rational and visionary, Bloomberg has cleared up the economic

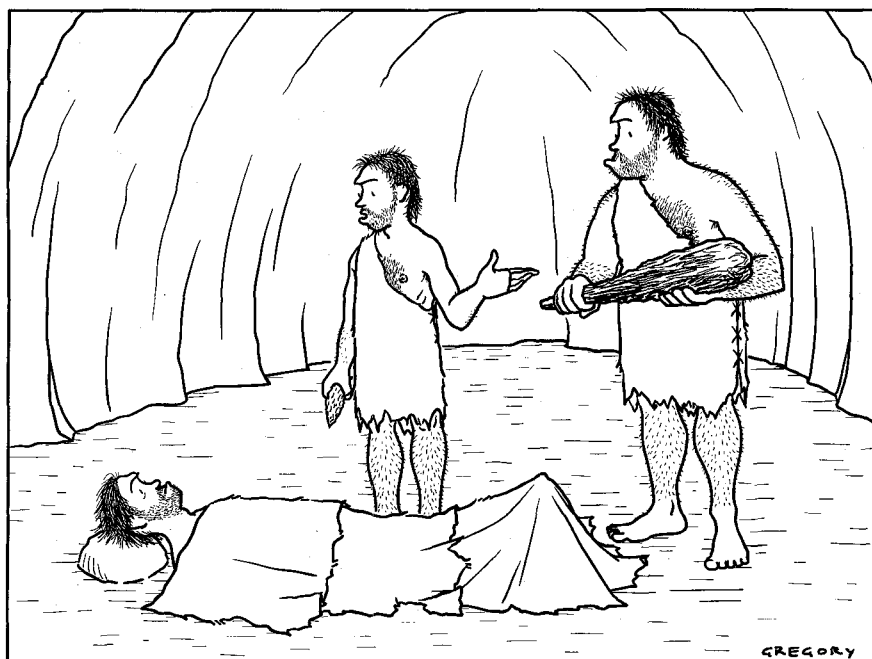
crisis that was left him; established the largest school-construction program in the history of the city; cooled some of the racial animosity; initiated important real-estate and municipal developments in all five boroughs; and made it possible to get a drink or eat dinner without risking lung cancer. He has sustained the best aspects of Rudy Giuliani's first term—especially a close, effective attention to crime—without any of Giuliani's creepy insularity and preening divisiveness.

But what of Bloomberg as a Presidential candidate—why the flirtation? Ed Koch, who is supporting Hillary Clinton but is a fan of Bloomberg's, blames New York's most reliable amenity. "It's the water," he says. "There's no lead in it, which can cloud your thinking."

Perhaps, but Bloomberg, beyond his scolding talk of hyper-partisanship, hasn't offered much to distinguish himself from those who have braved the comical and often appalling endurance test known as the nominating process. With Clinton, Obama, John Edwards, and others still in the Democratic race, Bloomberg's pro-science, anti-gun, pro-green, anti-smoking, pro-choice, anti-French fries just-left-of-center ideology seems a domestic agenda that is already well covered. And surely six years of trips to Staten Island do not make him an expert in foreign affairs. Bloomberg could siphon votes, mainly from the Democrats, but to what end?

In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, especially, third-party candidacies usually grew organically out of some overarching moral vision. The Liberty and Free-Soil Parties stood against the evil enormity of chattel slavery; the Socialist Party of Eugene Debs and Norman Thomas embodied a suppressed yearning for social justice and greater economic equality. "When a third party's demands become popular enough, they are appropriated by one or both of the major parties and the third party disappears," Richard Hofstadter wrote, in "The Age of Reform." "Third parties are like bees: once they have stung, they die." Bloomberg is not without ideas about political and economic reform, but he professes no grand and specific national plan. Still less has he evinced any desire to sting and then die.

There is no law against the super-wealthy funding their own third-party



"I'll be performing the operation, and this is the anesthesiologist."

candidacies. (The Supreme Court took care of that thirty-two years ago, in *Buckley v. Valeo*.) And, as New York's unfortunate term-limit law ushers Bloomberg out of City Hall, the Mayor has every right to mull his future: the rumors include his becoming a full-time philanthropist, buying the *Times*, and running for governor. But so far the big Presidential tease has been a prolonged exercise in self-regard. A man with Bloomberg's sense of noblesse oblige should know that there is something unseemly about waltzing into the Presidential race, or even hinting at it, for no reason more compelling than that he can afford to pay the bill without flinching.

—David Remnick

IOWA POSTCARD MAMMOTHS



For reasons not yet revealed, Hillary Clinton held her final Iowa campaign rally in a museum. The event, on the eve of the caucuses, opened to the sounds of the Canadian band Bachman-Turner Overdrive's 1973 classic "Takin' Care of Business" and closed with "9 to 5," Dolly Parton's 1980 ode to (and movie about) work. In between, as Hillary, Bill, and Chelsea Clinton waved and clapped to the music, it felt very much like watching the reunion of a nineteen-nineties band.

The size of the room wasn't quite up to the occasion—the final night of such a long and hard-fought campaign—and there were pockets of empty space. At the top of a column abutting the stage were the words "witness to change." "Change," as just about everyone in Iowa understood, had become the most important word in this Presidential campaign.

Rather than "demanding it," like John Edwards, or "hoping for it," like Barack Obama, Hillary told Iowans, "I believe you bring about change by working really, really hard." So it seemed rather lucky that her campaign had found an event space with a version of that slogan inscribed in the architecture. But, on closer inspection, it turned out that the phrase was part of an exhibit for the mammoths, long extinct, that once roamed what is now Iowa.

The skeleton of one of the beasts loomed ominously a few yards from the Clintons, and the museum's exhibit explained that the mammoths were witnesses to change because they "watched as their world disappeared and their dominance was usurped."

The Clinton nostalgia tour plays better in New Hampshire, so it's premature to declare the collapse of the Clintoncene epoch. But in Iowa Hillary seemed to be hobbled by a top-heavy, less indigenous campaign that was more reliant on outsiders than Obama's. For instance, on caucus night, at the Brookview Elementary School in West Des Moines, it was up to one Karen Brooks to marshal Clinton's troops in a large precinct that in 2004 generally mirrored the statewide results. Brooks, who is five feet ten with long fire-red hair, was an improbable choice for the job. She is not an Iowa organizer but a Washington consultant to multinational corporations operating in Asia. Her last vaguely political post was director of Asia affairs for the National Security Council. But, following her arrival in Des Moines to volunteer for the last days of Clinton's campaign, desperate staffers assigned her an entire precinct to run on caucus night.

As Iowans streamed into the Brookview gymnasium, a pattern quickly emerged. Dozens of voters stopped at a cafeteria table, where they registered as Democrats, and then headed to a corner of the room under Obama campaign signs. "We have a lot more Independents and Republicans coming in," Jim Riordan, the chairman of the caucus, said, as he gestured toward the table. "This is all new registrations here"—a hundred and fifty-four in all—"and they've just been flocking in, flocking in, flocking in. It's just amazing."

The Obama group kept growing, and his supporters soon ran out of chairs. The Clinton people sat quietly—they had plenty of seats—and watched as Brooks worked the room. When I asked Brooks how things were going, she pointed across the gym, sighed, and said, "It's hard. Look at that." She said that her campaign had projected that eighty-seven people would show up in the precinct; Riordan announced that the total was three times as many, at two hundred and sixty-three. After some horse-trading, the final tally was a hundred and fifty-five for Obama, sixty-three for Edwards, and forty-five

for Clinton. The pattern was repeated across the state.

The Iowa caucuses are quirky. The results are frequently unique to the state, and the significance of the outcome is often overstated. Also, the caucus system is notoriously undemocratic, with votes in some parts of the state counting more than in others, and rules that tend to exclude many workers, parents, and shut-



ins, while rewarding activists and campaigns with organizational muscle. But, in the "first inning in a fifty-inning ballgame" (Mitt Romney's phrase), Obama not only won the caucuses; he helped to democratize them. Attendance almost doubled, from a hundred and twenty-four thousand in 2004 to two hundred and thirty-nine thousand this time. The Democratic candidates succeeded in getting new voters to turn out, but, in the end, it was Obama who won most of them over. Mike Huckabee's victory over Romney and the distant runners-up in the Republican voting at first looked equally remarkable, but it relied on a narrow slice of Iowa Christian conservatives, suggesting that he could have trouble in states with fewer evangelical voters. Obama had a broad and sweeping victory, beating Edwards and Clinton among voters of both genders, all income groups, and most other demographic categories.

On a dead-of-night flight from Des Moines to New Hampshire, Obama, his blue striped tie loosened, walked cautiously to the back of the plane and chatted with reporters. As the new front-

runner, his comfortable relationship with the press may become more complicated. He said, jokingly, that he hoped that everyone would be well behaved. He gently criticized those skeptics who had said that it was impossible to fundamentally change the size and composition of the Iowa-caucus electorate. "I think it's a harbinger of what's going to happen around the country," he said, with characteristic self-assurance, as he stepped into the earliest voting state in the rest of America.

—Ryan Lizza

THE BENCH FRAUD ALERT



Explicit racism has disappeared from mainstream political discourse in the United States. Jesse Helms made his long career in Washington by muttering about "bloc votes," but he's been gone from the Senate since 2003, and he has no similarly outspoken successors. Lest anyone think that racial discrimination itself has been banished from politics, however, *Crawford v. Marion County Election Board*, a case that will be heard this week by the Supreme Court, provides a disturbing reminder.

One of the lesser outrages of the Supreme Court's decision in *Bush v. Gore* was the banal assertion that "after the current counting, it is likely legislative bodies nationwide will examine ways to improve the mechanisms and machinery for voting." In fact, the chief "improvement" that has come from the legislatures since 2000 is voter-I.D. laws, like the one that gives rise to this week's case. In 2005, Indiana began requiring voters to present government-issued photo identification before casting a ballot. (Georgia passed a nearly identical law at about the same time, and several other states have tightened voter-I.D. requirements.) These laws, their sponsors assured the electorate (and now the courts), were passed to correct the problem of voter fraud. As the state of Indiana says in its brief to the Justices, the new rule "establishes reasonable, long-overdue election-security reform in a State highly vulnerable to in-person election fraud."

Actually, it is this purported justification that is the real fraud. The latest and most extensive examination of electoral irregularities, released in November by the nonpartisan research institute Demos, determined that voter fraud was "very rare," and every other respectable study has reached the same conclusion. This is certainly true in Indiana, where legislators said they were aiming to stop "voter impersonation," which was already a crime in the state; in the entire history of Indiana, the number of prosecutions for this offense has been zero. Nationwide, despite an attempt by the Bush Justice Department to crack down on voter fraud, there were only a hundred and twenty federal prosecutions and eighty-six convictions between 2002 and 2006—a period in which close to four hundred million votes were cast.

"Let's not beat around the bush," Terence T. Evans, the dissenting Court of Appeals judge in the Indiana case, slyly wrote. "The Indiana voter photo ID law is a not-too-thinly-veiled attempt to discourage election-day turnout by certain folks believed to skew Democratic." He's not the only one to notice: the three federal judges who approved the Indiana law were appointed by a Republican President; the lone dissenter was appointed by a Democrat. It was also Republican-dominated legislatures that produced the Indiana and Georgia laws, both of which were signed by Republican governors.

Who are the "certain folks," in Judge Evans's delicate phrase, that the Indiana law is trying to discourage? The best answer can be found in a friend-of-the-court brief in the case filed by twenty-nine leading historians and scholars of voting rights. They concluded that the Indiana law belongs to a malign tradition in "this nation's history of disfranchising people of color and poor whites under the banner of 'reform.'" Such measures as the poll tax and literacy tests, they write, were "billed as anti-fraud or anti-corruption devices; yet through detailed provisions within them, they produced a discriminatory effect (often intended) within the particular historical context." So it will be in Indiana, where the law creates a series of onerous barriers to voting. Consider one: you can get a government photo I.D. by showing your birth certificate, but you can't get a copy of your birth cer-

tificate unless you can produce certain official photo I.D.s. And, with up to twenty million Americans of voting age lacking government-issued identification, the matter of requiring photo I.D.s has broad implications.

The Supreme Court case comes at a time when the nation does face a major problem with its elections, but it is the opposite of the one the Indiana law prescribes: it's not that too many people are voting but too few. Voter turnout rose in the 2004 Presidential election, but it still barely reached sixty per cent. There are any number of ways to begin to address this predicament: holding elections on weekends; allowing same-day registration and voting by mail, telephone, or the Internet; permitting registered voters to cast their ballots over several days or weeks; and putting polling places in shopping malls, to name just a few.

As the Demos report observes, "Overall, the disfranchisement of voters through antiquated voting systems, errors, mismanagement of registration bases, and intimidation or harassment is a far bigger problem today than traditional forms of election fraud." (These issues, it need hardly be added, were the real problem in Florida in 2000.) Unfortunately, the only serious attempt to address the legacy of 2000, the federal Help America Vote Act, which passed in 2002, today ranks somewhere between a disappointment and a fiasco. In essence, that law issued an unfunded mandate to the states to improve their voting procedures by 2006. Some states, like New York, largely ignored it; others, like Florida and Ohio, the states that, respectively, decided the past two Presidential elections, invested in systems that were, in many cases, less reliable than the old ones.

This week, a majority of the Justices will likely find a way to make a bad situation worse, and uphold the Indiana law. As a general matter, in recent years the Court has been reluctant to find what is charged in this case: a violation of the constitutional guarantee of equal protection of the laws. (The notable exception, to belabor the issue, was for a plaintiff named George W. Bush.) In the end, though, it will not be the judiciary that rescues democracy, whatever the obstacles, the problems with the ballot box must be solved at the ballot box.

—Jeffrey Toobin

INK
TESLA SLEPT HERE



According to Joseph Kinney, the chief engineer and unofficial archivist of the New Yorker Hotel (an ancillary enterprise not of this magazine but of the Reverend Sun Myung Moon's Unification Church), three types of inquisitive visitors regularly make pilgrimages there: (1) electrical engineers and technology enthusiasts; (2) people interested in U.F.O.s, anti-gravity airships, death-ray weapons, time travel, and telepathic pigeons; (3) Serbs and Croats. (A guest last year, Bozidar Djelic, the deputy prime minister of Serbia, inscribed for Kinney a copy of his book "Serbia: Things Will Get Better.")

What these callers have in common is a wish to pay homage to Nikola Tesla, the tragically underappreciated Croatian-born ethnic-Serb immigrant visionary who lived at the hotel, at Thirty-fourth Street and Eighth Avenue, for ten years and, in 1943, died there, at the age of eighty-six. Despite having conceived—but, inconveniently, not necessarily having perfected patents for—dozens of revolutionary devices, Tesla during his lifetime failed to receive proper credit, or royalties, for theoretical work that made possible wireless power transmission and X-rays. It's generally agreed that Tesla was an earlier inventor of radio than Guglielmo Marconi, who won the patent and a Nobel Prize. At the time of his death, Tesla was nearly destitute, having been bamboozled by, among others, Thomas Edison. He was undone as well by his own impracticality, deficient business acumen, and a predilection toward delusion.

The Tesla saga has provided fodder for an opera, a play, and several biographies. Standing in the lobby the other day, Kinney mentioned that he had been contacted not long ago by a woman named Natasa Drakula (from *that* family), who was interested in making a film about artists who were inspired by Tesla. Among the most recent is Samantha Hunt, whose novel "The Invention of Everything Else" will be published next

month. Its plot, not easily condensed, involves Tesla, a hotel chambermaid named Louisa, her father and his best friend, a semi-functional time machine, a mysterious visitor from the future, and a white pigeon who is the object of Tesla's most ardent affection. The book's apposite title is a play upon its epigraph, "Everything that can be invented has been invented"—an 1899 statement attributed to a U.S. patent commissioner (which, if not apocryphal, might rival "Major combat operations in Iraq have ended" as the Least Accurate Remark Ever Uttered by a Senior Government Official).



The New Yorker Hotel (no relation)

Among Hunt's inventions is the transformation of the hotel itself into an endearing character: "The tallest building in New York City when it was built in 1930 . . . forty-three stories high . . . its own power generator, producing enough energy to support thirty-five thousand people . . . kitchen is an entire acre . . . a hospital with its own operating room . . . an indoor ice-skating rink. . . Each room has its own radio broadcasting on four hotel channels. . . Twenty desk clerks . . . twenty-three elevator operators . . . a personal secretary for each floor . . . a gentle monster, a sleeping giant. . . Art-deco designs make the eyeballs pop. . . Everywhere is the world of tomorrow. Efficiency! Hurry! Chrome and glass!"

As proof, on New Year's Eve day Kinney and Hunt led a private tour through the hotel's innards: up to the forty-third floor (where the original exhaust fans and elevator hoists still function); a walk down

to forty-one ("Right here was the largest switchboard in the world—or the most telephone operators, anyway," Kinney said); an elevator ride and hike three levels into the subbasement, where a now sealed subterranean passage, still lined with the original Art Deco tiles, led to Pennsylvania Station. An obligatory stop along the way, naturally, was the thirty-third floor, where Tesla occupied Rooms 3327 and 3328, which the government of Serbia would like to see turned into a museum. For the time being, the space, somewhat reconfigured, still accommodates paying guests. Kinney knocked before using a passkey to open one door, then quickly closed it when he realized that the guest hadn't yet checked out. He didn't even try the other, which had a "Do Not Disturb" sign hanging from the knob.

After passing through the laundry facility (where a crew of uniformed women were pressing bed linens with a seventy-five-year-old steam-ironing device) and the machine shop, Kinney proposed a detour to the boiler room. "I don't know if Tesla came down here, but it's one of the places he would have considered fun," he said. "If I go to a hotel, I'd rather see the boiler room than the pool."

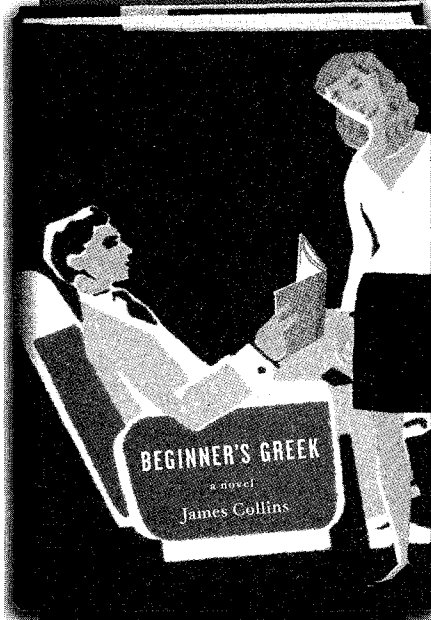
"I'm in your camp, Joe," Hunt said.

Back upstairs, in Kinney's office, on the sixth floor, Hunt, who is thirty-six, said, "Until I was twenty-five years old, I'd never heard of Nikola Tesla. And when I first started the novel I really knew nothing about him. Eventually, I encountered the problem of having too much factual information. I didn't want to lie. I felt, This poor man, he's been so maligned. I had to leave things out that were true that I thought nobody would believe. The pigeon, which I didn't leave out, was true."

Hunt was drawn to Tesla, she said, by the appeal of "looking at the imagined future from the known past." She added, "I guess it might also enable me to look at what's happening now and imagine the future. Though part of what I liked about studying Tesla is that I consider myself something of a Luddite. The house I grew up in was built in 1765. Four of my closest friends are in their eighties. My mother never throws anything out, so everything in the house looks as it did forty-five years ago. Actually, I guess I'm not a very future-forward person."

—Mark Singer

**On a flight from
New York to LA, Peter
met the girl of his
dreams in seat 12-B...**



Then he lost her number.

Adriana Trigiani says
"Impossible to put down."



Kurt Andersen calls it
"Smart, elegant,
madly romantic."



"Jane Austen fans
will feel right at home."
—*Library Journal* (★)



"Captivating....A satire of
modern love that will
charm both sexes equally."
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ANNALS OF COMMUNICATIONS

THE SEARCH PARTY

Google squares off with its Capitol Hill critics.

BY KEN AULETTA

In June, 2006, Sergey Brin, one of the co-founders of Google, went to Washington, D.C., hoping to create a little good will. Google was something of a Washington oddity then. Although it was a multibillion-dollar company, with enormous power, it had no political-action committee, and its Washington office had opened, in 2005, with a staff

Brin did meet with Senators John McCain and Barack Obama, and they spoke about "network neutrality"—an effort that Google and other companies are making to insure that the telephone and cable companies that provide high-speed access to the Internet don't favor one Web site over another. Around the time of Brin's visit, an organization called Hands Off



Sergey Brin and Larry Page, the founders of Google, believe that expanding their company

of one, in suburban Maryland. The visit, which was reported in the *Washington Post*, was hurried, and, in what was regarded by some as a snub, Brin failed to see some key people, including Senator Ted Stevens, of Alaska, who was then the chairman of the Commerce Committee and someone whose idea of the Internet appeared to belong to the analog era. (He once said that a staff member had sent him "an Internet.") Brin told me recently, "Because it was the last minute, we didn't schedule everything we wanted to." It probably didn't help that his outfit that day included a dark T-shirt, jeans, and silver mesh sneakers.

the Internet, financed in part by telecommunications companies, ran full-page newspaper advertisements in which it accused Google of wanting to create a monopoly and block "new innovation"; one ad featured a grim photograph of a Google facility housing a sinister-looking "massive server farm." Brin recognized it as a warning. "I certainly realized that we had to think about these things, and that people were going to misrepresent us," he said. "We should be entitled to our representation in government."

Google's ambitions had not gone unnoticed by its competitors. What Google had created—an ingenious tool for searching the Internet—had evolved into

MARK ULRIKSEN

something almost unimaginably far-reaching. The company's mission is "to organize the world's information and make it universally accessible and useful." Making information "universally accessible," though, is an ambitious goal that often clashes with those whose business is to own and distribute it.

In October, 2006, Google outbid Microsoft and the News Corporation to acquire YouTube, the dominant online video site. Alarms went off: Hollywood media companies feared that YouTube was hijacking television viewers by downloading their programs; and, last March, Viacom filed a billion-dollar lawsuit against Google for copyright infringement. Earlier, Google had declared that it wanted to digitize all the

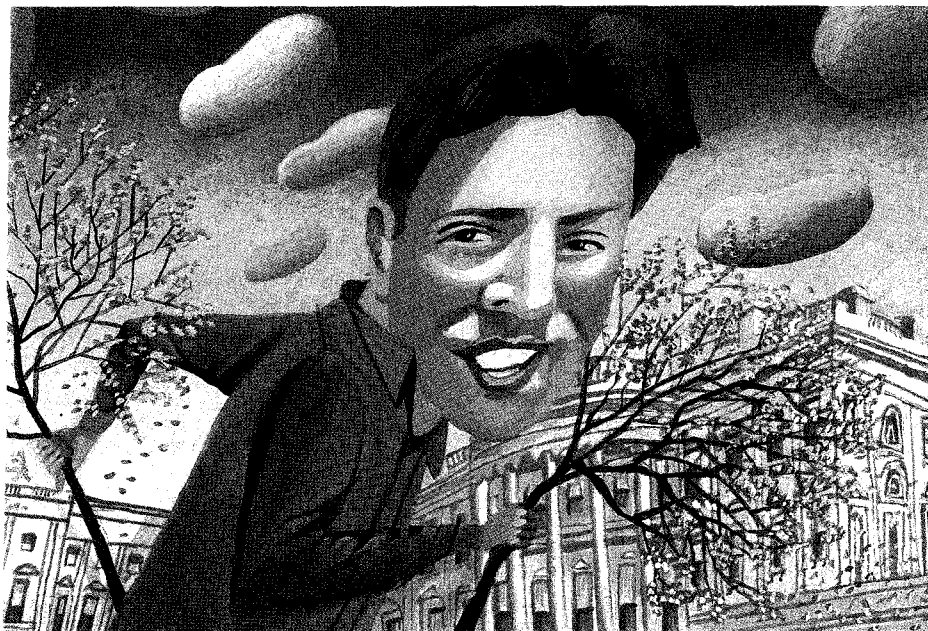
reportedly produce profit margins of about seventy per cent.) Google already offers similar software—word processing to compete with Microsoft Word, spreadsheets, e-mail, instant messaging, managing business data and contacts, PowerPoint-like-presentation software, personal calendars—that is Web-based and, for the most part, free. Google calls this "cloud computing," meaning that anyone with an Internet connection can store data in this "cloud" and retrieve it from any location.

In response to prodding by consumer activists, some government officials—notably Senator Herb Kohl, a Wisconsin Democrat—have begun to ask: Does Google, which today is among America's ten richest corporations, with a market

In its 2004 annual report, Google, amending its basic corporate strategy, officially signalled its intent to be more than a search engine. The company announced that seventy per cent of its efforts would continue to be directed to its "core" mission, "our web search engine and our advertising network." Another twenty per cent of its energies would be devoted to "adjacent areas such as Gmail"—the free e-mail accounts available to just about anyone who wants one—and the range of software that falls under the heading of "apps." Finally, the report said, "the remaining 10 per cent is saved for anything else, giving us the freedom to innovate." To other media companies, this sounded suspiciously like declaring, "We are in the search business, but we might be in your business." Last spring, Google bested Microsoft, Yahoo, and the enormous advertising-marketing firm WPP to buy DoubleClick, the online advertising and marketing company. DoubleClick claims up to twelve billion daily transactions. Even without it, Google has amassed one of the world's largest databases—a resource that has helped in altering its mission. "We are in the advertising business," Eric Schmidt, Google's C.E.O., told me not long ago.

Marc Andreessen, who helped create the first Web browser, Mosaic (which became Netscape), and who today is an Internet entrepreneur, says, "The game plan is to do everything. Google is Andy Kaufman"—the late, enigmatic comedian. "The whole thing with Andy Kaufman was you could never tell when he was joking. Google comes out with a straight face and says, 'We're just going to be a search engine. We're not going to be doing any of this other stuff.' But I am quite sure they're joking."

Google, which is based in Mountain View, California, now accounts for just over sixty per cent of the world's Internet searches, and its power comes from the data it collects from all those searches. When a search is done on Google, a "cookie," or fingerprint, is created and stored in the browser of the computer being used. It records what you're looking for and what you read or simply what you're curious about. Your search query is stored by Google for



lobbying operation in Washington, D.C., has become a necessity.

world's books, including those under copyright. Despite Google's assurances that it would protect authors and publishers, the company was unable to allay the fear that digitization would eventually cheapen the value of the books; and publishers and writers expressed concern that Google would profit from book searches without sharing the ad revenue. Newspapers were unhappy that Google was luring away readers and advertisers. And Microsoft, the world's mightiest technology company, feared that Google was becoming too powerful—that it was designing Web-based software applications similar to Microsoft's Office. (Microsoft sells Office in packages that

value of just over two hundred billion dollars, have too much power? (Exxon-Mobil, valued at just under five hundred billion, is No. 1.) Unlike Microsoft, which in 2000 was found guilty of anti-competitive behavior, a finding upheld in a federal appellate court, Google has not been charged with violating any laws. But there has never been a company whose influence extended so far over the media landscape, and which had the ability to disrupt so many existing business models. And its competitors share a vague worry that Google is more or less out to rule the world. All this attention unsettled Brin and Larry Page, Google's co-founder.

eighteen months. Over time, Google might be tempted to extract more and more user data to better target ads. This year, Google's ad revenues are expected to reach sixteen billion dollars, approaching the combined national advertising revenues of the four major broadcast networks. The purchase of DoubleClick, for a proposed \$3.1 billion, has only heightened anxiety about Google.

Google's executives have become wiser about the company's image. "The product brand was very strong," Alan Davidson, Google's senior policy counsel, who is a computer scientist as well as a lawyer, and who oversees Google's Washington office, told me. "The political brand was very weak. Because we were not here to define it, it was being defined by our enemies." He paused a moment, and added, "'Enemy' is a strong word. It was being defined by our competitors."

The modest one-man operation in Washington has expanded considerably and now includes about thirty people, among them Robert Boorstin, a former speechwriter for President Clinton; Johanna Shelton, a former senior counsel to Representative John Dingell, chairman of the House Energy and Commerce Committee; and Pablo Chavez, a former chief counsel to John McCain. In October, 2006, the company established its own PAC, called NETPAC, and since then it has hired three outside firms to lobby on its behalf: the mostly Democratic Podesta Group; King & Spalding, where Google works with former Senators Connie Mack and Dan Coats, both Republicans; and Brownstein Hyatt Farber Schreck, which hired Makan Delrahim, the former Deputy Assistant Attorney General in the Bush Justice Department's Antitrust Division.

"We've been under the radar, if you will, with government and certain industries," David Drummond, a Google senior vice-president, observes. Drummond, who is based in Mountain View, oversees all the company's legal affairs. "As we've grown, we're engaging a lot more. We've had to put a lot more emphasis on engaging." Google's Washington office reports to both Drummond and Elliot Schrage, the vice-president for global communications and public affairs, who is also based in Mountain View, and one of its immedi-

ate tasks has been to address the privacy issues raised by the proposed acquisition of DoubleClick. "Privacy is an atomic bomb," a Google executive who does not want to be identified says. "Our success is based on trust."

By the end of 2007, Google's overriding concern was that it avoid comparisons to the Microsoft of 2000. "No question that people here regularly discuss Microsoft's experience and use that as a cautionary tale," Schrage says. Brin says, "Microsoft is a bit of an unusual company. It doesn't seem to like any of us being successful in the technology space." This summer, Microsoft and Google competed for a small stake in the social-network site Facebook; in October, Microsoft won that competition, paying two hundred and forty million dollars for 1.6 per cent of the site, whose profits were meagre but which has about sixty million active users and competes with Google as a home page. When I met Facebook's founder, Mark Zuckerberg, for dinner in Palo Alto, Zuckerberg, who is twenty-three, sipped lemonade and chose his words about Google carefully, saying, "On the highest level, we're both trying to supply people with information that interests them."

Andy Grove, the former chairman and C.E.O. of Intel, who was an enthusiastic supporter of Google's founders when they started the company, in 1998, believes that there may be more worry about Google than there was about Microsoft. "Microsoft's power was intra-industry," he told me. "Google's power is shaping what's happening to other industries." Because of this, he says, Google is increasingly seen as a company "on steroids, with a finger in every industry."

The Google story, like the rise of Microsoft—or the Beatles—has already become a legend of popular culture. In 1995, Brin and Page, graduate students at Stanford, figured out a way to scan and index the Internet. Earlier search engines had done this, but Brin and Page did it better. By 1998, they had incorporated Google, coming up with a company name that suggested the audacity of their ambition. ("Google" is the math term for the figure 1 followed by a hundred zeros.) And they came up with an informal company motto to signal their benign intent:

"Don't be evil." In 1999, when Marissa Mayer was hired as the first female engineer and the nineteenth Google employee, the entire Google search index, she says, "was thirty million pages, and we did four hundred thousand searches my first day." Today, it reaches billions of pages. And, according to ComScore, Google does an estimated four hundred billion searches a year.

In 2001, Page and Brin hired their first C.E.O., Eric Schmidt, who had a Ph.D. in computer science and twenty years of management experience in tech companies; most recently, he had been the C.E.O. of Novell. They settled on an unusual power-sharing arrangement. As Schmidt describes it, "We've agreed that on any major decisions the three of us agree." By 2002, Google had become very profitable, thanks to a novel program called AdWords, in which advertisers bid to display their ads whenever a Google user searches for keywords. If the user then clicks on the advertisement—a "sponsored link"—Google earns revenue on a pay-per-click basis. In 2003, Google introduced its second advertising vehicle, AdSense, which sells advertising to content sites. For advertisers, the system is a lot more scientific than the way that ads are placed on television or in magazines, because they can count clicks; for Google, the monetary benefits are obvious. In 2004, Google went public, selling its stock at an opening price of eighty-five dollars per share. Page and Brin, each of whom owned about fifteen per cent of the company, became billionaires; so did Schmidt, who owned about six per cent. Google's stock has at times climbed over seven hundred dollars a share, and a great many Google employees have become fabulously wealthy.

In 2005, Google, outbidding Microsoft, paid a billion dollars for a five-per-cent stake in AOL and a five-year contract to deliver all AOL searches and search-based advertising. But it was the intended purchase of DoubleClick, a company that specializes in display and banner ads and video advertising, that unnerved many in the advertising industry. Microsoft, joined by A.T. & T., claimed that the combination of DoubleClick and Google would be "anti-competitive," and pressed the Federal Trade Commission to block the merger. WPP

also raised concerns. Not surprisingly, ad agencies worry that Google might steal their business—that it might create advertising as well as sell it. Mark Read, WPP's director of strategy and a member of its board of directors, says that an aggressive Google "makes our people nervous. They tend to talk to our clients directly. Traditional media has been much more respectful of the client-agency relationship than perhaps Google has been." Read is most worried about Google's vast database, which forms a "virtuous circle"—more searches produce more data, which attract more advertising dollars.

Tim Armstrong, Google's president of advertising and commerce for North America, says that the company has no desire to create advertising; it "requires too many employees, and we're a technology business." Google recently recruited Andy Berndt, a co-president of Ogilvy & Mather, to run its new Creative Lab division, but Armstrong insists that Berndt was hired to work on Google's brand and marketing, not to create advertising for clients. "Not only does the advertising industry have nothing to worry about; it should expect to ask, 'What are the three to five things you need from us?'" Armstrong says. Martin Sorrell, WPP's C.E.O., has claimed that his company is Google's largest advertising-agency customer. He also calls Google a "frenemy."

Unlike the advertising revenues of many traditional media companies, which have slowed or fallen steeply, Google's advertising revenues have been rising from year to year; for 2007, they are expected to have increased by more than thirty per cent. Google's advertising sales forces point out that Americans spend the same number of hours a week online as they do watching television—fourteen—yet only six per cent of advertising dollars is spent online, while television gets twenty-two per cent. DoubleClick would bring video ads, which generate more revenue, to Google.

Lawrence Lessig, who teaches law at Stanford and has long been a student of digital culture, says, "Google's brilliant because it architects its system so that, when people do what they want to do, they give something to Google. When I do a search, I give Google my evaluation

of what the best search is. Google profits from that. If I want to send an e-mail, I give Google data." These data invite advertisers to bypass traditional media buyers and let Google manage their Internet advertising. When I asked Sergey Brin if Google would displace media buyers or media sales forces, he gave a somewhat elliptical answer: "We have no desire to screw a category of people, to trick them or something. We legitimately want these partners to be successful." He believes that "the nature of these functions" may change, just as the role of librarians has. Google, he says, should be regarded as a tool to help media buyers, who for the most part serve large advertisers. He envisions Google doing more to serve small businesses, and of established media buyers he says, "Are they going to buy a one-hundred-dollar spot in a small newspaper?"

The Bush Administration is a reluctant regulator, believing that in most cases a free market provides its own regulation. Jeff Chester, the executive director of the nonprofit Center for Digital Democracy, takes the opposite view. A close reader of trade publications, he became obsessed by the power of Google to compile data on the behavior and interests of users. Chester runs a two-person organization that has an annual budget of two hundred thousand dollars, but his

influence is surprisingly broad. (A decade ago, he and his wife, Kathryn Montgomery, a professor of communications at American University, successfully marshalled support for the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act.) Chester speaks rapidly and passionately, jumping in mid-sentence from privacy to monopoly and then to a conversation he had that morning with an F.T.C. staffer. His small office, on lower Connecticut Avenue, is adorned with posters for movies attacking corporate power. Chester has little regard for the advertising industry, but he knows that if he railed against hucksterism and commercialism it would marginalize him, so he has stressed the privacy issue.

"The basic model for interactive advertising combines advertising with this very powerful data-collection business designed to know your interests in a daily, updated way," he says. "This is then utilized to create very powerful multimedia to get you to behave in some fashion, whether it's buying a product or liking a brand." Chester urged Senator Kohl to hold a one-day hearing on the issue, and pushed for the F.T.C. to broaden its examination of Google to include privacy; in November, the agency held a desultory town-hall meeting to explore the issue.

Google acknowledges on its Web site that it collects information about



"It won't work if I tell you what I want, because if I tell you what I want I won't want it anymore."

users. However, it does not collect personal identifying data such as credit-card information, telephone numbers, and purchasing history unless a user signs up for a feature like Google Checkout. EBay and Amazon, among others, also collect user information, but Google is set apart by its reliance on advertising. Marc Rotenberg, the executive director of the Electronic Privacy Information Center, who works closely with Chester to advance privacy-protection measures, believes that the central question should be "Why does Google need to retain all this information?"

Eric Schmidt says that the more Google knows about a user the better the search results—that the idea is to anticipate a user's intent in a search query. And with data suggesting that about half of all searchers use the ads to comparison-shop or to buy, Google believes that better-targeted ads serve both the user and the advertiser. "We think of the ad as content," Google's senior vice-president for engineering, Jeff Huber, says. As for risks to personal privacy, Eric Schmidt says that Google would never cross that boundary; if it violated user trust, "we'll really be hosed." When I asked Sergey Brin why consumers should trust Google with their personal data, he said, "How many people do you think had embarrassing information about them disclosed yesterday because of some cookie? Zero. It never happens. Yet I'm sure thousands of people had their mail stolen yesterday, or identity theft."

Brin and his colleagues often say that they are eager to work with others, and the company has "ten thousand partners," including publishers who have agreed to have their books digitized, media companies that promote their programs on YouTube, and newspapers and magazines that recruit Google to sell ads for their online or print editions. Google has also taken a few modest steps to address privacy concerns. Last summer, it announced that it would voluntarily reduce from two years to eighteen months the time that it keeps the Web-search histories of its users. It endorsed the idea of uniform international privacy rules. When I spoke with Pablo Chavez, in Google's Washington office, he told me that the

THE STAR MARKET

The people Jesus loved were shopping at the Star Market yesterday. An old lead-colored man standing next to me at the checkout breathed so heavily I had to step back a few steps.

Even after his bags were packed he still stood, breathing hard and hawking into his hand. The feeble, the lame, I could hardly look at them: shuffling through the aisles, they smelled of decay, as if the Star Market

had declared a day off for the able-bodied, and I had wandered in with the rest of them—sour milk, bad meat—looking for cereal and spring water.

Jesus must have been a saint, I said to myself, looking for my lost car in the parking lot later, stumbling among the people who would have been lowered into rooms by ropes, who would have crept

out of caves or crawled from the corners of public baths on their hands and knees begging for mercy.

If I touch only the hem of his garment, one woman thought, could I bear the look on his face when he wheels around?

—Marie Howe

company is experimenting with "crumbling cookies," or smaller cookies "that collect a limited amount of data" and vanish over time.

In late December, the F.T.C. approved the acquisition of DoubleClick. The agency's role is to judge whether a merger impedes competition, and, according to a senior regulator in the Bush Administration, it tends "to wait for a violation before it acts." The Australian government recently approved the merger, but its fate is less certain in the European Union, particularly since the Europeans announced, in mid-November, that they would extend their investigation into whether it would violate European notions of privacy and anti-competitive activity, which are stricter than America's. If the E.U. rejects the merger, it seems likely that Google would abandon it.

Google's corporate home, within sight of the Santa Cruz Mountains, reflects the determination of the two founders to make sure that employees stay focussed. They keep them on the campus with perks—ranging from free physicals to free laundry service

and a weekly car wash. Employees get a subsidy if they buy an environmentally friendly car; Brin and Page have both owned Priuses. (They also jointly own a Boeing 767, and are buying another jet.) Employees are urged to devote twenty per cent of their time to developing projects on their own. "It's a way of assuring people that they are scientists and artists," the Indian-born engineer Krishna Bharat, who used his time to invent Google News, says. All of this makes Google an attractive employer. The company, which now employs about sixteen thousand, receives more than a million résumés a year, and through much of 2007 hired about a hundred and fifty people a week—half of them engineers.

In the 2004 annual report, Page and Brin wrote of their six-year-old company, "If it were a person, it would have started elementary school late last summer . . . and today it would have just about finished the first grade." Eric Schmidt thinks that Google has skipped over adolescence and advanced to "middle age," and that with this has come the wisdom of experience. Tim Wu, a professor of law at Columbia University

who once worked in Silicon Valley and closely follows events there, says, "It's a precocious company. Great grades. Perfect I.P.O. A typical high-school standout. The basic problem is whether it remains true to its founding philosophy. I don't just mean 'Don't be evil.'" He means, will it stay focussed on its "founding philosophy, which is really an engineer's aesthetic of getting you to what you want as fast as you can and getting out of the way," or will it become "a source of content, a platform, a destination?" He says, "I predict that Google will wind up at war with itself." Brin rejects this analysis, but when asked about his biggest worry he answers simply, "I worry about complexity. I admire Steve Jobs. He has been able to keep his products simple."

The youth of the founders (Brin is thirty-four and Page is thirty-five) leads to jokes that someone like Schmidt, who is fifty-two, was essential to manage Google. "It borders on insulting to say that Eric provides 'adult supervi-

sion,'" Elliot Schrage says. "It is insulting to both." Yet there are times when Schmidt does supervise. One day, I asked him how he felt about the U.S.A. Patriot Act, which gives the government broad powers—including wiretapping and reading e-mail—to investigate terrorist suspects. "I'm not a big fan," Schmidt said. "I'm offering you my personal opinion as a citizen."

Later, at a press lunch attended by the founders and Schmidt, I asked about Google's position regarding the government's use of the Patriot Act. "I'm not an expert on the Patriot Act," Brin said. "But it's certainly a long-standing issue prior to the Patriot Act—"

"Can I?" Schmidt interrupted. Not waiting for permission, he proceeded: "The best way to answer this question is to say it's the law of the land and we have to follow it."

"Or, in some cases, we fought it in court," Brin said, referring to Google's successful challenge of a Justice Department request, in January, 2006, to hand

over search data to aid the Bush Administration's defense of an Internet-pornography law. The company accused prosecutors of a "cavalier attitude" and said that the government was "uninformed" about how search engines work. Again, Schmidt interrupted, saying, "We fought it legally, and we followed the law, and we won in court."

"Every once in a while he does this unintentional condescending thing, and he does it in public settings," a Google executive says of Schmidt. On Tuesdays, Brin, Page, and Schmidt hold product-strategy meetings, which are dominated by engineers. I was permitted to attend one, on the condition that the product, and the engineers, not be identified, but the tenor of the meeting was clear enough: Page and Brin had wanted an upgrade of an existing product, and they were unhappy with what they were hearing from the engineers. At first, they were stonily silent, slid down in their chairs, and occasionally leaned over to whisper to each other. Schmidt began



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with technical questions, but then he switched roles and tried to draw out Page and Brin, saying, "Larry, say what's really bugging you."

Page said that the engineers were not ambitious enough. Brin agreed, and said that the proposals were "muddled" and too cautious.

"We wanted something big," Page added. "Instead, you proposed something small. Why are you so resistant?"

The head of the engineering team said that the founders' own proposed changes would be too costly in money, time, and engineering talent.

Schmidt—the only person at the meeting wearing a tie—tried to summarize their differences. He noted that Brin and Page wanted to start by deciding the outcome, while the product team focussed first on the process, and concluded that the engineering would prove too "disruptive" to achieve the goal.

"I'm just worried that we designed the wrong thing," Brin said. "And you're telling me you're not designing the optimum system. I think that's a mistake. . . . I'm trying to give you permission."

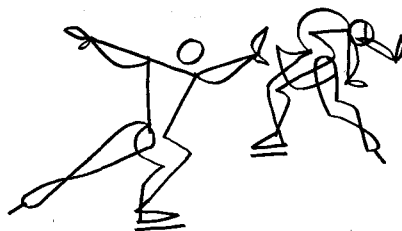
The product team went on to make a slide presentation, but everyone there realized that the issues would not be resolved that day. Schmidt told the team to report back with a detailed design "that is responsive to Larry and Sergey's criticism," and to clarify "what it takes to build a good product," and what it would cost in time and money. However, he balanced this with praise: "But this is very well done. I love it when people show me the flaws in our products."

In meetings such as this, Page and Brin are like a tag team, taking turns as they chide employees for devising something that is merely a "cute" solution, not a fundamental one. Schmidt says, "They think about what should be, and they assume it is possible." Brin and Page also introduce a measure of what Schmidt refers to, affectionately, as management "chaos." Neither has an assistant. Executives check Google Calendar to learn if Brin or Page plans to attend a meeting. Sometimes, Schmidt says, the founders show up, unscheduled, for the wrong meeting. Sometimes they simply disappear—flying off on their Boeing, for instance, or indulging their newest sport, kite surfing.

Some outside Google believe that Schmidt operates with many constraints. "I learned that Google had an interesting management structure," Philippe Dauman, the C.E.O. of Viacom, says, describing the negotiations that preceded the YouTube lawsuit. "Every time we thought we came down to a certain point, the Google people changed their minds. And they changed the people in the negotiations." He explains, "I talked to their C.E.O., and then when Eric went down a certain path he had to have a discussion back in Mountain View with his two associates. Often, there would be a total change in direction." Within Google, the view is different. Sheryl Sandberg has been a senior officer at the company for six years, and observes that the reason the troika works "is that whoever you go to for an answer, that answer sticks." Brin says of Schmidt, "Eric is the leader for the company. Larry and Eric and I all share in the top-level leadership, but mostly Eric takes on the hardest challenges. Larry and I can spend more time on products and technology."

For months, Schmidt tried to get the founders to write a corporate-strategy memo. Finally, on a business trip to Seville, he opened his e-mail and up popped a draft from Brin. Perfect, Schmidt thought, and he showed it to Page before circulating it to the senior staff. "Why couldn't I get them to write this in a normal way?" Schmidt asked me. "That's not the way their minds work. Their ideas are much better than mine."

The ads attacking Google and its "server farm" were a prelude to what may be Google's next frontier: the mobile-telephone business. There are almost three billion mobile phones worldwide, and Schmidt expects a billion more in the next four years. If the phones use Google software to sell advertising, Schmidt thinks that over time it is "mathematically possible for Google to become a one-hundred-billion-dollar corporation." Two vital markets are television,



which is "easily attainable," and mobile phones, which are "more personable" and more "targetable" than most advertising. To achieve this goal, Google would need to claim ten per cent of all global advertising, which now amounts to just under a trillion dollars.

Google's interest in mobile phones surfaced last spring, when it announced that, to advance the goal of an "open net," it was likely to make an initial bid of \$4.6 billion for a slice of the nation's wireless airwaves. (The Federal Communications Commission is auctioning off the rights to the last significant corridor of the wireless spectrum this month.) In November, Google announced the formation of an Open Handset Alliance, made up of technology companies like Intel and smaller phone companies that would support free software designed by Google. Clearly, Google was intending to break the control that companies like Verizon and A.T. & T. have on deciding what services to allow on mobile phones. Google has decided to bid, though it is not clear whether it will bid alone or with a partner—or even whether the aim is simply to push competitors to open their systems.

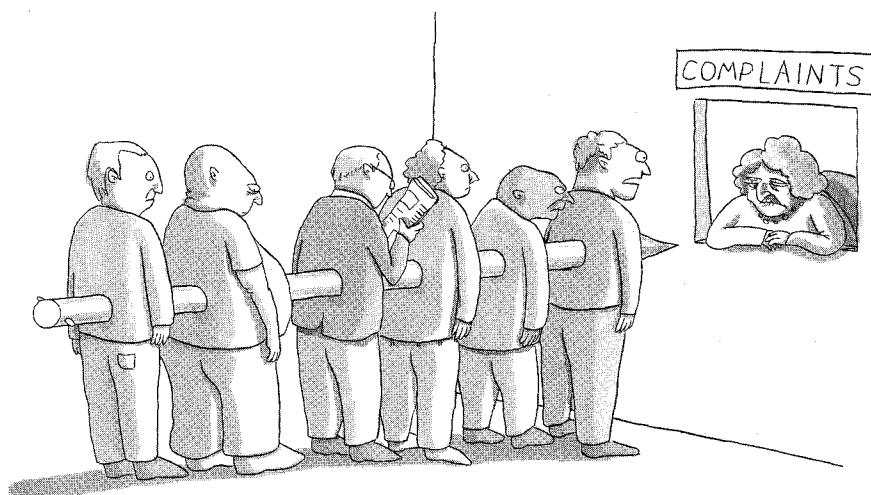
Google may wind up bumping into its corporate ally Apple. Although the iPhone features Google Maps and Google search, Google wants to create an operating system for mobile phones the way Apple has—a potential conflict. Four of Apple's eight directors are either Google directors or Google senior advisers. One of the Apple directors is Eric Schmidt, who now recuses himself from mobile-phone discussions at Apple board meetings.

As Google expands beyond search—in late November, Page and Brin announced that Google would invest hundreds of millions of dollars in developing environmentally friendly renewable-electricity technologies that would produce power more cheaply than coal-fired plants—the risk is that the company will come to believe that its engineers can master any business, solve any problem, and that Google will lose its focus. Terry Winograd, a professor of computer science at Stanford, was Larry Page's academic adviser and mentor when Page and Brin were Ph.D. candidates. A friendly man with a white mus-

tache and bushy eyebrows, Winograd, who has taught at Stanford since 1973, was given Google stock for work that he did early in the company's history. He admires his former students, but he describes their impatience as both a virtue and a potential curse. "Larry and Sergey believe that if you try to get everybody on board it will prevent things from happening," he told me. "If you just do it, others will come around to realize they were attached to old ways that were not as good. . . . No one has proven them wrong—yet." Google's potential weakness, Winograd says, is that its engineers see things "not from an institutional, political point of view but from this personal and engineering point of view. 'We would never do that sort of thing'—they believe that in their hearts." But the engineers' passion, he said, also drives them to believe that they "are smart enough to make sure that it won't happen by accident." With that, Winograd arched an eyebrow and concluded that this entails "a certain amount of technical arrogance: 'The system cannot fail, *cannot fail*.'"

Last August, Schmidt flew his own jet, a Gulfstream G550, to Aspen to give the keynote dinner speech to the free-market-oriented Progress & Freedom Foundation. He outlined four "basic principles" that he believes are vital for media and technology companies to embrace, among them freedom of speech and assuring universal broadband access. Missing from his presentation were thoughts about privacy and copyright—and how far Google might push the boundaries. For instance, when does fair use become copyright infringement?

A few weeks later, I sat with Schmidt in his cramped conference room on the Mountain View campus. I asked him why he hadn't touched on the subject of privacy in the Aspen speech. There was a long pause before he said, "No particular reason. It's sort of a given. If we violate the privacy of our users, they'll leave us." And copyright? "Maybe it was the altitude. I was just chatting away." In addition, Schmidt said, copyright "is not an absolute right," and has to be balanced by "fair use." When I asked whether Google wanted to push the envelope on privacy and copyright, he said,



"I think I speak for all of us."

"That's probably correct. If there's a legal case, we're going to favor the legal one that favors users."

What sets Google apart, Schmidt told me in another conversation, is that although people like him always assumed that "Google would be an important company, the founders always assumed that Google would be a defining company." He remembers a day in 2002 when he walked into Page's office and Page started to show off a book scanner he had built. "What are you going to do with that, Larry?" Schmidt recalls asking. "We're going to scan all the books in the world," Page replied. Eventually, Google began to do just that. It signed up Page's alma mater, the University of Michigan, along with, among others, the Library of Congress, Stanford, Oxford, and the New York Public Library. And then it ran into trouble.

Google still faces obstacles from publishers and authors and television networks; search competitors like Yahoo! and Microsoft; so-called vertical search engines that rely on human experts; advertising agencies and telephone companies. One senior executive at Time Warner, who did not want to be identified, because Time Warner's AOL division is a Google partner, says, "Sometimes I don't know what to think of Google. We have the best relationship of anyone with Google. On the other hand, you always have to worry when someone gets so

much more powerful than all the competition out there. This is why I come down to this: I hope the government starts understanding this power sooner rather than later."

Eric Schmidt, not surprisingly, has another view. "In our society, bigness is often associated with bad," he says. "There is no question that a company with the ambitions of Google will generate controversy, will have people upset with us. The question is: Where does it come from? Is it coming from a competitor? Is it coming from a business whose business model is being endangered by the Internet? Or is it because we're behaving badly?" He believes that it often comes from companies threatened by change. "When you have a technology that is as engrossing as the Internet, you're going to have winners and losers. I'm not trying to sound arrogant. I'm trying to sound rational about it. The Internet allows people to consume media in a different way." He believes that because Google is "run by three computer scientists we're going to make all the mistakes computer scientists running a company would make. But one of the mistakes we're not going to make is the mistake that non-scientists make. We're going to make mistakes based on facts and data and analysis." He paused. Then he said, "What kills a company is not competition but arrogance. We control our fate." ♦

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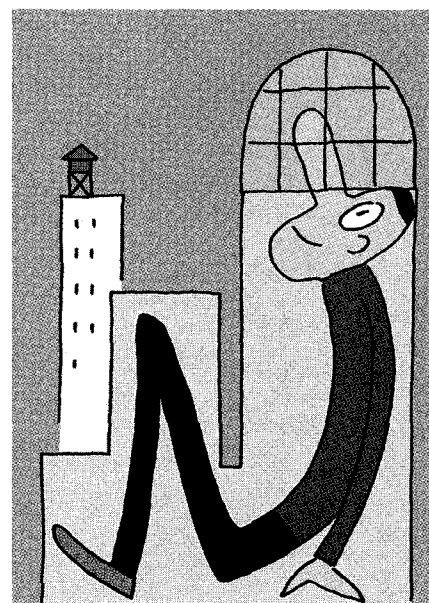
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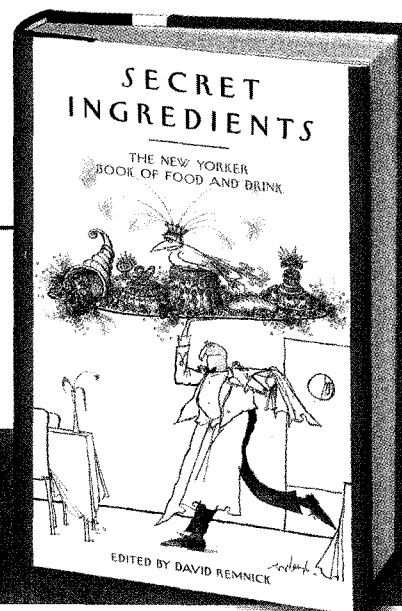
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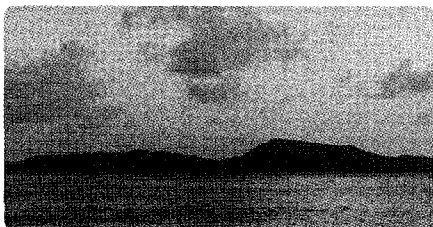
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LETTER FROM CALIFORNIA

CHÂTEAU SCIENTOLOGY

Inside the Church's Celebrity Centre.

BY DANA GOODYEAR

Franklin Avenue, skimming past the mouth of Hollywood's eastern canyons, at the disappearing far-north edge of city maps, forms a halfhearted high street for the apartment dwellers clustered on its banks. Public life happens in the Mayfair grocery store, and in a block-long stretch of sidewalk cafés and used-book stores. The apartment buildings are old, and in some cases beautiful, like the Villa Carlotta, a late-nineteen-twenties Mediterranean-style structure designed by Arthur Harvey, where the architect Wallace Neff lived for many years.

Across from the Villa Carlotta is the avenue's defining anomaly: a monumental turreted castle, also designed by Harvey, on a three-acre site, with formal gardens, a bubbling stream, a tennis court, and a pair of rubber trees that are more than a hundred years old. Seven stories tall, the castle is an overgrown folly the color of farm cream, with swaying long-necked palms that seem to graze its roofs. "You want to circle the block and look at it," Richardson Robertson III, a local architect, says. "It's unusual in the modern-box world we live in to see so many nooks and crannies and little windows and interesting roof lines." Built as the Château Élysée, a long-term residential hotel for movie stars, it is considered by preservationists to be one of the city's grandest Norman-revival buildings. (The Château Marmont is smaller and sits on considerably less land.) Since 1973, the Château Élysée has been owned by the Church of Scientology, which calls it Celebrity Centre.

Scientology, the religion that grew out of L. Ron Hubbard's popular self-help manual "Dianetics: The Modern Science of Mental Health," incorporates aspects of Eastern philosophy, management theory, and science fiction—a genre in which Hubbard was prolific. The first Scientology church was established in downtown Los Angeles, in 1954. Although the Church's spiritual

headquarters are in Clearwater, Florida, and it has facilities around the world, Scientology is most deeply associated with Los Angeles and its entertainment industry. The dozens of local buildings owned by the Church, many of them historically significant and now prominently marked with posters advertising "Dianetics" or with the eight-pointed cross that serves as one of Scientology's symbols, have entered the landscape of iconic L.A. architecture as a visually stimulating mash of old Hollywood and seventies-style art direction and signage. At Celebrity Centre, where a large yellow sign affixed to a south-facing roof overlooking the 101 Freeway announces the building and its owner, this juxtaposition is especially acute. Diane Kanner, an architectural historian who specializes in twentieth-century Los Angeles, calls the building Château Scientology.

From the outset, the conversion of celebrities was important to Scientology. An internal newsletter produced by the Hubbard Communications Office, probably in the mid-fifties, asserts, "There are many to whom America and the world listens. On the backs of these are carried most of the enthusiasms on which the society runs." It goes on, "It is obvious what would happen to America if we helped its leaders to help others. Project Celebrity is part of that program. It is obvious what would happen to Scientology if prime communicators benefitting from it would mention it now and then." The piece concludes with a list of the day's stars—Orson Welles, Howard Hughes, Walt Disney, and Greta Garbo among them—referring to them as "game" and "quarry" for Scientologists to "hunt." Though Scientology is not known to have had success with this early group, the movement now counts Tom Cruise, John Travolta, Kirstie Alley, and many other celebrities as members.

Celebrity Centre is used for Scientology courses and for "auditing," a main-

stay of the religion, in which a person undergoes a guided talk-therapy session, usually while holding a device known as an E-Meter, which is supposed to measure one's spiritual state. The goal is to eliminate "mental image pictures" associated with traumatic events; when a person is "Clear"—freed of all such associations—he can advance to the mystical and esoteric levels of Scientology. The path to becoming an "Operating Thetan," or pure spiritual being ("thetan" being Hubbard's word for the soul), is laid out in a table called "The Bridge to Total Freedom: Scientology Classification Gradation and Awareness Chart of Levels and Certificates." Scientology is a technological religion and claims to have developed "exact, precise methods to increase man's spiritual awareness and capability." Completion of the Bridge takes years, and each stage requires a cash investment. An initial twelve-and-a-half-hour auditing session costs between six and seven hundred dollars, Greg LaClaire, a vice-president of Celebrity Centre, says. (Aspiring Scientologists can mitigate the expense by choosing to be audited by a fellow-initiate rather than by a staff member.) In the Holiday 2007 Dianetics and Scientology catalogue, a deluxe Planetary Dissemination Edition E-Meter—billed as a "tool for Golden Age of Tech certainty," to assist in "faster progress up The Bridge"—was offered, in "Diamond Blue," for five thousand five hundred dollars.

On Celebrity Centre's upper floors, there are thirty-nine hotel rooms to accommodate visiting Scientologists. An undated leaflet advertising "a safe environment for Celebrities and Scientologists" contains a plug from Travolta: "Good rest, good food, good service but most of all I felt very safe in this space"; *Celebrity*, a magazine produced by Celebrity Centre, which features a Scientology celebrity on the cover of every issue, urges readers to stay at the hotel for five to six weeks "to complete your Basics books & lectures courses faster!" In the basement, there's a drug detox facility. The castle also fosters a feeling of community. "Hollywood's not a very easy industry to bust into," Hilary Royce, a former dancer who went to Sarah Lawrence and is now the director of community affairs for the Church of Scientology International, told me. "Any

artist at Celebrity Centre would tell you it's a safe place to study scripts, to network. It's really a hub."

The promise of connectedness attracts many Hollywood hopefuls. Celebrity Centre offers a range of Success in the Industry Seminars—Breaking Into Commercials, How to Get Cast in the Pilot Season, Hollywood Acting Class—

pitch. I started to get really pissed, and then they started to say that my stress was causing discomfort in my life."

"Those seminars are absolutely, utterly, entirely an introduction to Scientology," Greg LaClaire told me. "They are an introductory service of the Church." But he said that he found the actor's account otherwise suspect. "There's so



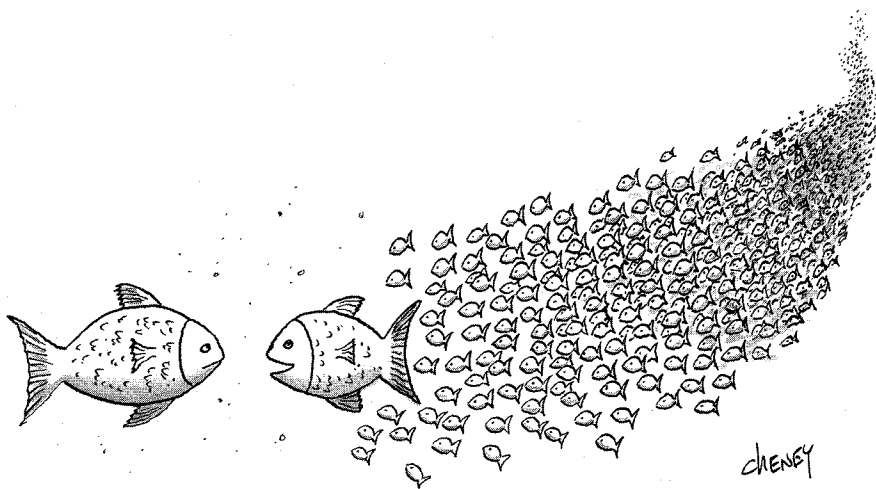
"The celebrity is a special public," a Church official says. "We've got to help them."

which it promotes with flyers posted at auditions around town. A former actor I spoke with told me that when he first got to Hollywood, a decade ago, he went to Celebrity Centre for what "seemed like a legitimate industry workshop," only to find that "it was more or less an opportunity for them to solicit people."

"I stood in the foyer and watched this massive indoctrination presentation, where Marissa Ribisi, Juliette Lewis, and a casting director came out talking about how great it is to be in Scientology," he said. "This celebrity panel was confirming that the people in the audience could in fact realize their dreams if they took courses and got 'Clear.' Then I was followed by auditors, who tried to get me to go into another room and get audited. It was a pervasive, invasive type of sales

much interest in Scientology. We really, really, really don't have any inclination or the time to talk to someone who's not interested."

Alongside glowing testimonials from people—celebrities and not—who credit Scientology for personal transformation, there are stories of savings spent, lives derailed, critics harassed. Non-Scientologists tend to get a thrill from the aura of coercion and seduction—not to mention kitsch—that clings to the Church. To them, the castle is a particular object of fascination, a magnificent confection that must not be tasted. The offerings of its kitchen are another matter. Celebrity Centre's restaurant, the Renaissance, is open to anyone who cares to eat there. A Hollywood producer, who asked



"It's my weekend to have the kids."

that I not use her name in case she ever needs to deal with John Travolta's agent, recalled a brunch at the Renaissance some years ago, attended by non-Scientologist movie executives, agents, directors, and actors. "Everyone was titillated," the producer said. "It was like going to the foreign land and seeing the exotic people." In this case, she said, that meant some peculiar waiters, who repeatedly photographed them, rather than any recognizable celebrity. After the brunch, the producer and her friends asked for a tour of the building, and were taken upstairs to a penthouse suite where, they were told, Ginger Rogers used to stay. "The room is totally tricked out," the producer said. "There were these two little old ladies, who were obviously Scientologists, oohing and ahhing." As the tour moved on, the producer and her boyfriend dallied. "We actually considered getting on the bed and having sex. I so wish that we had done that. Imagine being frog-marched out of the Celebrity Centre for getting busted having sex in the Ginger Rogers suite!"

Two years ago, Julien Nitzberg, a writer and director, decided to have a fortieth-birthday dinner at the Renaissance. His friend John Dutton, an architect, said that he was delighted at the chance to see the inside of the building. "I had always wanted to go there out of architectural curiosity, but you hear stories about people who go in and don't come out," he said. "I wasn't about to knock on the front door." It was a cold, dark night in early December. "The Christmas lights were going up.

It was like a theme park—well manicured and clean and very carefully arranged and designed," Dutton recounted dreamily. The Renaissance was nearly empty, the wine served warm. The waiters seemed like actors impersonating waiters. Dutton and his fiancée, not relishing being in the deserted building late at night, left right after dinner. Others in the group went for a tour, and at the end were taken into separate rooms and asked if they would like to sign up for an introductory course. Nitzberg recalled that one of the tour guides kept saying things like "Woooo, it's so spooky, we're Scientologists," and wiggling his fingers at them. Late that night, Nitzberg sent Dutton's fiancée an e-mail from home:

Subject: I just hacked this computer.

We are locked in the Centre and can't get out. Come back and save us immediately!!

When I went to Celebrity Centre in December, for "Christmas Stories," an annual variety show, which, like the Renaissance, is open to the public but attended mainly by Scientologists, I detected nothing more threatening than a familiar air of Hollywood clubbiness. The stage, in a large iron-and-glass orangery known as the Garden Pavilion, was dressed to resemble the set of a nineteen-thirties radio show, with an electric "On Air" sign, a wide-mouthed fireplace stacked with logs and laden with red poinsettias, and a giant Christmas tree decorated with red and gold ornaments. The audience, with the exception of a

couple of heavily made-up women in slinky, discover-me! attire, looked like typical NPR-listening folks. An actor named Jim Meskimen played the jovial m.c., introducing four ample men in red cummerbunds and bow ties—"the Chairmen of the Chord"—who sang "Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer." There were sketches about the writers' strike, and then Lynsey Bartilson and Patrick Renna spoofed Frosty the Snowman (Renna, as Frosty: "The last thing I remember, I was a glass of water at the Four Seasons in Pasadena!") with a cast of children drawn from Celebrity Centre's song-and-dance troupe, Kids on Stage for a Better World. Jenna Elfman came out dressed as an elf, in striped tights and a green hat, along with a pigtailed Kelly Preston, also in an elf costume; at the end of their skit, about being laid off by Santa, Ella Bleu Travolta (Preston's daughter, with John Travolta) appeared, a confident child with glossy dark hair in a red hoodie, to tell them they could have their jobs back. At intermission, cookies and hot cider were served.

The highlight of Act II was Kirstie Alley, in a formal green gown, making fat jokes while pretending to judge the Westminster Tree Show. (Her children, True and Lillie Parker, wore Christmas-tree costumes.) The evening was short on L.R.H., as Hubbard is affectionately known to his disciples; a Hubbard quote on the back of the program, where Tom Cruise and John Travolta were thanked as benefactors, was so unobjectionable as to be trite: "When children become unimportant to a society, that society has forfeited its future." Proceeds from the tickets (seventy-five dollars for a reserved seat) benefitted the Hollywood Police Activities League, and went toward holiday gifts for underprivileged children in the neighborhood.

A newspaper story from 1928 announcing the plans for the Château Élysée reported, "A grassed moat will surround the building. Drawbridge entrances will lead into its lobby and corridor and armorial subjects will illuminate the vaulted ceiling." There were also six-paned casement windows and gargoyles in the eaves. But the Gothic aura of the château, which cost just under a million dollars to construct, was always more than architectural.

The château was built by Eleanor Ince, on land she had owned with her husband, Thomas Ince, a silent-film pioneer who was known as the Father of the Western. In the teens, the Inces homesteaded on the property in a one-story ranch house decorated with Indian headaddresses and Western gear. On Ince's forty-third birthday, in 1924, he was invited onto William Randolph Hearst's yacht, with Charlie Chaplin, Louella Parsons, Hearst, and Hearst's girlfriend, Marion Davies. While on board, Ince fell ill; he died at home a few days later.

Some time after Ince's death, rumors emerged that Hearst had murdered him upon discovering him with Davies. This sinister version of events, which includes the speculation that Eleanor built the Château Élysée with hush money from Hearst, was immortalized in Kenneth Anger's "Hollywood Babylon," and persists—promoted by noir tours of Hollywood—to the Ince family's dismay. "People said that Hearst gave Eleanor the money," Marc Wanamaker, a Hollywood historical consultant who has worked with the Inces, says. "No. She was vice-president of Ince Studios and a partner in the business. She sold the assets to friends and built the Château Élysée, where she lived in a big suite. She invited friends—retired silent actors and actresses—to live there, in a five-star apartment house."

Throughout the thirties and forties, the château was an industry hangout. Luminaries who stayed there include Errol Flynn, Carole Lombard, Katharine Hepburn, and Cary Grant, and the Church invokes its Hollywood lore proudly. In the reception area of the Renaissance hangs a framed menu from 1937 (creamed turnips, gooseberry cobbler, a filet-mignon dinner for a dollar-fifty), discovered in the attic by the building manager, Art Medeiros. "This was the dining room when Humphrey Bogart would've eaten here," Medeiros told me. "This was the primo place in town." It's as if Falun Gong bought the Algonquin and advertised the gin Martinis that Dorothy Parker used to drink, but the Church's emphasis on the entertainment industry has made the building's transition to its current use seem almost logical. Ken Bernstein, the head of the city's Office for Historic Resources, put it this way: "Celebrities equivalent to today's Scien-

tology celebrities—people who had that level of glamour and prestige—were significantly associated with that building."

The Church of Scientology bought the Château Élysée for a million dollars from a group affiliated with the First Congregational Church of Los Angeles, which had been using it since the nineteen-fifties as a retirement home. The building was run-down, with rebar poking through its shell, and, as studios moved to the valley and stars moved to Bel Air and the beach, the neighborhood, too, was becoming increasingly desolate. The Church used volunteers and staff for the restoration. Stephen Kent, a sociologist at the University of Alberta who specializes in alternative religions and has interviewed many former Scientologists, told me that "much of the labor that renovated the Celebrity Centre was performed by people on the R.P.F., or Rehabilitation Project Force, who often worked dangerously long hours for almost no pay." (Bob Adams, a former N.F.L. tight end who is the vice-president of the Church of Scientology International, said that the R.P.F.—which is sometimes characterized by critics as a punishment for Church staff members who get out of line—is a volunteer program for self-improvement. "They get frequent breaks, eight hours of sleep, and three healthy meals," he said. "The principal part is auditing, but the physical activity is very extroverted for the individual and is found to be very therapeutic in itself." Besides, he said, the R.P.F. furnished only a portion of the labor for Celebrity Centre and worked alongside professional contractors.) In the late eighties, the city designated the château a historic-cultural monument and effectively prevented the Church from gutting it. "I think somebody noticed that we were prettying it up, and that's when the historians got involved," Medeiros says.

The acquisition of the Château Élysée marked the beginning of a spending spree by the Church in Hollywood. In 1977, it bought the expansive Art-Deco Cedars of Lebanon Hospital, near Silver Lake, and painted it a chalky azure color. The complex, which comprises ten buildings on and around L. Ron Hubbard Way—including the American Saint Hill Organization, a Scientology college—is known to Church members as Pacific Area Command.

Hollywood Boulevard, too, is a major

stronghold. In 1979, the Church bought the Christie Hotel, a 1923 Georgian-revival, and the adjacent lot, where the chic Club New Yorker, owned by the actor Jean Malin, used to be. In the mid-eighties, the Church bought a 1923 bank building near Grauman's Chinese, as an office for Author Services, a literary agency that manages the publication and translation of L. Ron Hubbard's work, and in 2000 it acquired the late-forties mission-style church next door. In 1988 came the Guaranty Bank, a twelve-story 1925 Italianate Beaux-Arts building where Hedda Hopper once had an office. Now it houses the L. Ron Hubbard Life Exhibition and the office of the Church's international management, as well as an office of its Religious Technology Center, which holds the trademarks for Dianetics and Scientology, and, according to Church literature, "was created to meet the need to ensure the standard application of the technology and to eliminate any possibility of Scientology falling into the wrong hands." R.T.C. is run by David Miscavige, the most powerful figure to emerge in the Church since Hubbard's death, in 1986.

Across the street is the former Regal Shoe store, a pinkish-beige nineteen-forties streamline-moderne structure, with papered-over and black-curtained windows, bought by the Church in 1996 and used by its in-house architecture-and-design team. Four years ago, the Church spent \$4.6 million on the El Cadiz, a gracious 1937 Spanish-style garden-apartment complex just off the boulevard. Six months later, the city—perhaps concerned for the building's fate—designated it a historic-cultural monument. The boulevard is also marked by more covert references to the Church's reach. The marquee of the shuttered Vogue theatre reads, "NOW LORD XEMU," presumably a prankster's allusion to one of the more mysterious aspects of what is widely believed to be Scientology's cosmology. Shrouded in secrecy and said to be intended only for upper-level Operating Thetans, it involves a malevolent galactic warrior known as Xenu or Xemu. (When I asked Bob Adams about Xemu, he said, "A small fraction of our scriptures are confidential, and I don't want to allude to something confidential.")

In the seventies and eighties, the Church, despite its fortifying real-estate acquisitions, found itself besieged. Dis-

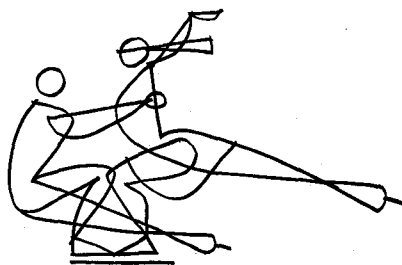
satisfied former members alleged financial and psychological abuse; some asked for their money back. Journalists wrote exposés. Lawsuits abounded. Fighting to regain the Church's tax-free status (which was revoked in the late sixties and eventually reinstated), Scientologists infiltrated government offices, stole documents, and bugged an I.R.S. meeting. In the investigation, Celebrity Centre and the Cedars of Lebanon complex were searched by the F.B.I., and L. Ron Hubbard's wife was sentenced to four years in prison for her role in the conspiracy. But for the Church of Scientology, a new religion with limitless ambition and a sharp awareness of the importance of image, rehabilitating elegant old buildings serves both as a powerful means of repairing its reputation and as a tangible metaphor for that work. It has spent tens of millions of dollars on seismic upgrades and historic restoration of its Hollywood properties, and would have spent far more had it paid market rates. The exteriors of its buildings are spotless, and many of them are watched over by twenty-four-hour cameras and security guards. "They do it to enhance their visual status," Robert W. Nudelman, the director of preservation at Hollywood Heritage, told me.

By the time the Church began to buy on Hollywood Boulevard, most other investors had fled, and the street belonged to dealers, runaways, and bums. Tourists came on coaches, saw the Walk of Fame, and got straight back on the bus. The Church of Scientology was one of the few things going; often, in those days, theirs were the only lights on after dark. Meanwhile, the Church worked to identify itself with the dream-factory aspect of Hollywood, both through its celebrity adherents and by promoting L. Ron Hubbard's gig, in the late thirties, as a writer of pre-feature cliffhangers and serials. (At one point, Hubbard's followers tried to get a star for him on the Walk of Fame, in recognition of his work in the industry.) It made little difference to the Church that Hollywood the neighborhood no longer had much to do with the entertainment industry. "Hollywood's blessing and its curse is that it's always been at once a place and an ideal," Eric Garcetti, the city-council member who represents Hollywood, says. "The Church of Scientology has always made those two things synonymous in its work. They consciously draw

on the glamour of old Hollywood. They want to appeal to the creative community—actors, writers—and mine the best of that Hollywood ethos."

Nowadays, the Scientologists are part of the local establishment. The Church has hosted Chamber of Commerce mixers in its buildings; it helps out with an annual police- and fire-department barbecue, has a representative on the board of the Hollywood Arts Council and another on the board of the local business-improvement district, and maintains a strong presence in the Hollywood Thanksgiving-weekend parade. During the Christmas season, the lot next to the Christie is fashioned into "Winter Wonderland," a display with a towering fir tree and a resident Santa Claus on a faux-snow-and-glitter-encrusted set. "The longer they're here, the more credibility they have and the more respect," Leron Gubler, who runs the Chamber of Commerce, says. Kip Rudd, a senior planner at a city-redevelopment agency which came into Hollywood in the eighties to spur investment, says, "The Scientologists were the jewels along the boulevard in terms of keeping it vital. They've taken a variety of nice old buildings and maintained and upgraded them." Last year, the *Los Angeles Business Journal* gave the Church an award for adaptive reuse.

Other developers, encouraged by friendly politicians and incentives, have followed the Church's lead. "There's no question that people saw the beauty of old Hollywood in the buildings that they own and maintain," Garcetti says. "They helped many of us picture what a fully restored neighborhood might look like." The Broadway Hollywood, on the eastern end of the boulevard, a luxury apartment building whose interiors were designed by Kelly Wearstler, recently opened in an old department store. (Charlize Theron has reportedly bought a place there.) Night clubs have moved into the old storefronts and are attracting movie stars again. A W hotel is under construction. Hilary Royce,



Scientology's community liaison, says that other property owners on the boulevard have come to the Church for advice about how to renovate their buildings. "We were some of the first people restoring our buildings to their original grandeur," she told me. "We were the real pioneers, no question, and we're proud of it."

Crossing the threshold of Celebrity Centre, you step over a cracked coat of arms embedded in the uppermost stair and a rounded script that reads, "Château Élysée." The Renaissance is directly on the right, in a delicately proportioned main room with an enclosed terrace. One afternoon in December, after an extensive tour of Scientology properties, I went to the Renaissance for lunch with Royce, Adams, and Greg LaClaire, of Celebrity Centre.

It was past two, and the place was empty, except for Girard, a lugubrious French maître d', and a pale young woman pouring ice water. We sat on the terrace, in carved-wood chairs with upholstered backs and seats, reproductions of the reproduction Louis XIV furniture found in the Château Élysée. I ordered lobster salad, and watched a security guard on a bike turn circles near a babbling fountain on the winter-brown lawn. A radio played fuzzy Christmas music. The Scientologists set about explaining the special role of the artist in society, and how, by enhancing the lives of artists, the Church enhances culture as a whole. LaClaire, who grew up in the Church and has worked at Celebrity Centre since he was nineteen, said, "There are a thousand people a week doing services here, each of them an artist or someone in one of the artistic industries, and twenty to twenty-five of these people are well known." He went on, "A huge percentage of Scientologists who are well known weren't well known before Scientology."

Royce mentioned that Hubbard had written on this subject, and excused herself from the table. She returned a few minutes later with a dusty green book, "Organization Executive Course, Public Division, Volume 6," part of a series written by Hubbard that is used in the management and standardization of all areas of Church activity. Royce read aloud from it: "Celebrity Centres should work to rehabilitate old or faded artists." She looked momentarily flummoxed, and began flipping through the pages, perhaps searching for

something more ennobling. After a few more attempts, she closed the cover and set it down beside me. I opened the book. The pages were copies of typed memos by Hubbard. From 1971, the Celebrity Centre motto: "Real celebrities deserve the best in staff and service and image"; from 1973, "The purpose of Celebrity Centre is: to forward the expansion and popularization of Scientology through the arts, while remaining solvent and using highest quality tech." After a few moments, Royce took the book away, saying that I could find more helpful information in the glossy Celebrity Centre brochure.

Outside, a woman in work pants and a beige shirt maneuvered a wheelbarrow over a little bridge leading toward the Garden Pavilion. Earlier, Royce had said that if a non-artist or non-celebrity wanted to pursue Scientology at Celebrity Centre, "they wouldn't be turned away, but we might recommend a different church." Now she elaborated. "Here's the big picture with Scientology and Dianetics," she said. "The religion is expanding and expanding and there's a particular public and that public has needs. Celebrities are just a special public. They are. There's a celebrity public and a doctor public and a dentist public and a plumber public." She rambled on a bit, before returning to her original point. "The celebrity is a special public," she said. "We've got to help them."

Art Medeiros, the building manager, met us in the dining room and showed me molding, hand-painted in pastel colors by Church members, which he said had been refashioned from fragments found at the site. Hand-painted images of theatre masks, music stands, and dancing slippers decorated the walls. "We restored this room to be like the palace in Versailles," he said. "We sent a couple of our designers to France and they went to châteaux and hotels. They found that things were very eclectic in Europe, so we re-created that here. The renovations in this room added a lot more details and colors and stuff—before, it was a lot plainer. This was the first room to be done, in '87. It was a prototype for the rest. The historians *loved* this room. As you can see, it's a bit rococo, but it wasn't overboard." The Scientologists improve upon the past in the spirit of Sir Arthur Evans reconstructing the Palace of Knossos—call in the carpenters, fresco the walls, and suddenly the old heap looks like something. Nudel-

man, from Hollywood Heritage, who visited the building when it reopened, told me, "Subtlety was never really something I noticed with their work."

We walked down the hall—triple-coated with pink, cream, and salmon paint, applied to the walls with sea sponge—to the former lobby, where Church artisans had painted the ceiling with a trompe-l'oeil landscape of ancient columns dripping with vines. The walls were hung with colorful posters and flat-screen televisions playing videos to illustrate the major principles of Scientology. In a corner, near a roaring fire, was an E-Meter.

I saw lots of people in their twenties and thirties, casually but deliberately dressed, streaming downstairs, like college students let out of class, or gathered at a small outdoor café, smoking. I recognized Patrick Renna—Frosty—but no one else. In front of the elevator, there was a long-haired kid in expensive skate-inspired clothes, talking on a cell phone. Maybe he will be famous someday.

We took the elevator to the fourth floor, where the walls were decorated with paintings made by Scientologists in the style of seventeenth-century portraits. Medeiros let us into No. 407, a suite with a large living room, a kitchen, and a bedroom up a flight of stairs. "Kirstie Alley designed this suite," he said. "This is the Chinois, Oriental look." Bronze-and-blue Chinese toile wallpaper ran through the living room and kitchen and covered the hood of the oven. A porcelain statuette of an Asian woman formed the base of a lamp with a square bell shade. The kitchen cabinets were original, and painted white. A small-tiled sink was new but probably historically accurate, except for the metallic color of some of the tiles. "She went for gold," Medeiros said. "She wanted a little flash."

Upstairs, in the bedroom, there were silver-gelatin prints of Gloria Swanson, Mary Pickford, Rudolph Valentino. The floors were bamboo, in keeping with the Asian theme. Tasselled floor-to-ceiling drapes in robin's-egg blue were drawn back to reveal a green landscape of tree-tops and fronds. The late-afternoon sun made the Villa Carlotta and its tile roof glow orange. The Hollywood sign was visible high up on the hill. I stood there and tried to fix it in my mind. It was likely the best view of it I'll ever get. ♦

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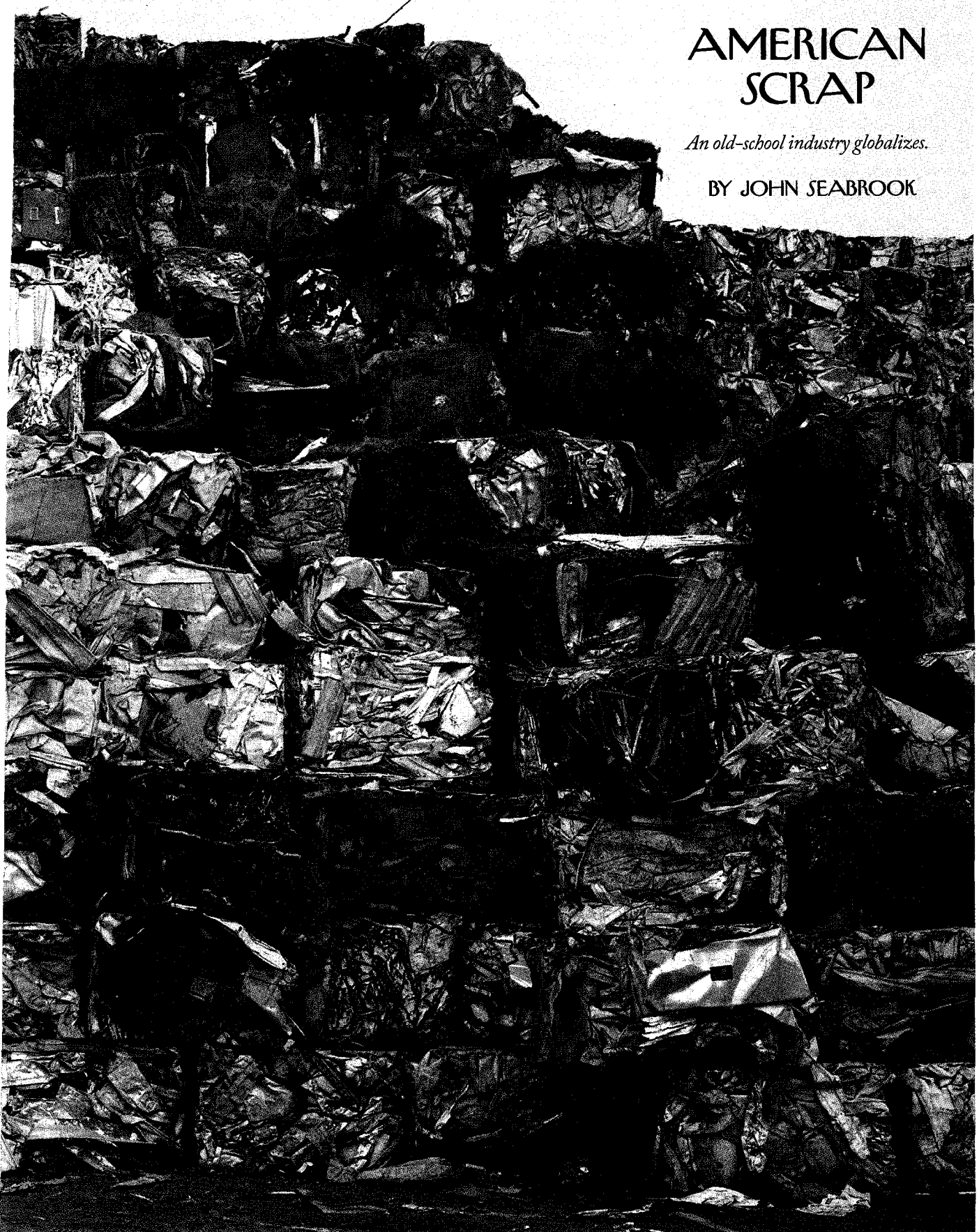
Scrap metal was one of America's most valuable exports last year, thanks to rapid growth in China and India, where it is used in construction

A REPORTER AT LARGE

AMERICAN SCRAP

An old-school industry globalizes.

BY JOHN SEABROOK



materials. In a sense, China's industrial might is being created out of the ruins of our own. Photograph by Robert Polidori.

The Foot of Hawkins Street scrapyard sits on twenty-seven acres of industrial parkland, at the edge of Newark's old Ironbound District. The yard's metallic topography—large piles of scrap metal, mainly of steel, but also of copper, aluminum, and stainless steel—can be seen from the West Side high-rises in Manhattan. Sometimes, when the sun hits the piles, they glitter like honey-coated breakfast cereal. The yard also contains a range of machines used in the deconstruction business, including a shear, a baler, and two overhead cranes, which work through the piles of metal with the stately rhythm of large browsing ruminants. The air holds a tangy but not unpleasant metallic essence, and is periodically rent with the shriek of shattering steel, heard over a thudding backbeat of mangled appliances that the cranes drop into piles—food for a nearby shredder. If you listen closely, you can hear the tinkling of the “shred”—the fist-size hunks of metal that emerge from the shredder—raining down on the shred pile. That's a comforting sound to people in scrap, because it sounds like money.

It was a warm day in late September, and I had arranged to meet Daniel Dienst, the C.E.O. of Metal Management, which owns the yard. Dienst, forty-two, is a youthful and charismatic former investment banker from Gravesend, Brooklyn, who had recently become the head of America's first nationwide scrapyards. Only days earlier, Metal Management had announced that its already extensive network of yards was merging with the interests of the Sims Group, of Australia. Sims has an operating presence at more than a hundred locations, on four continents, and trades annually in nine million tons of metal. The new combination will gather metal from all over the globe, process it, and ship it from the consortium's own ports to mills in the United States and abroad. It will be the largest metal-recycling company in the world.

There are two ways to make steel: one is to create virgin steel from iron ore and coke, and the other is to melt down used steel and recycle it. Recycled steel is just as strong as virgin steel. Unlike paper and plastic, steel can be melted down and recast indefinitely; it has no structural memory. Making recycled

steel, in electric-arc furnaces, or E.A.F.s, requires less capital investment than making virgin steel, which is manufactured in huge integrated mills; it also saves energy, and is easier on the environment, because not as much ore has to be mined. The only disadvantage of recycling is that it can be hard to know exactly what's in your raw material—the steelmaker must rely on the scrap dealer's ability to separate out other metals, particularly copper, which can weaken the steel. In 2006, two of every three tons of steel made in the U.S. came from recycled steel.

The U.S. steel industry is not the world leader it was once, but no one produces more junk than we do—scrap metal was among our most valuable exports last year. Yet until now the scrap industry has been a hodgepodge of mom-and-pop junk yards. The aim of the Metal Management-Sims merger is to create a scrap company with enough corporate heft to negotiate with steelmakers. As Jeremy Sutcliffe, the C.E.O. of Sims, explained it to me, “The worldwide steel industry has consolidated, so it makes sense for the scrap business to consolidate. It gives us a seat at the table.”

So far, Dienst's timing has been very good. The demand for metals has been soaring, largely as a result of the rapid growth of China, India, and other developing nations in Asia, driving up the prices not only of scrap but also of aluminum and copper. In 2001, the price of steel scrap was around seventy-five dollars a ton; last year, it reached almost three hundred dollars a ton. Copper has risen even more dramatically: in 2006, it briefly hit the unheard-of price of four dollars a pound. The stock of Metal Management has climbed from below four dollars in 2003, when Dienst assumed full control, to a high of fifty-seven, last October.

Dienst was wearing his customary jeans, button-down white shirt, and brown suede cowboy boots. An Allman Brothers fan, he owns a 1958 gold-top Gibson Les Paul—an exact replica of the guitar that Dickey Betts played in the band, right down to the cracks and nicks in the varnish—which was given to him by his business colleagues, and which he keeps next to his desk at his office, on East Sixty-ninth Street. He

looks nothing like Big Pussy, from “The Sopranos”—my idea of what a Scrap King was like. Or, for that matter, like Carmine Agnello, John Gotti's former son-in-law, a heavysset mobster who made millions from his scrap-metal business in Queens before he began serving a nine-year sentence for racketeering and conspiring to defraud the I.R.S., in 2001. (Metal Management now owns Agnello's yard.)

In the yard's office building, a map of the world hung on a wall. Dienst, gesturing with a half-outstretched hand, as though he were explaining his strategy in a Risk game, showed the company's control of American scrap. He wriggled his fingers over the New York waterfront, saying, “We've got New York and”—the fingers drifted west—“we've also got Chicago, and the yards on the rivers in the Midwest, and”—a cupping gesture over California—“we've got the ports in L.A. We've got the tracks, and the freeways; we can ship by rail, by barge, or by break-bulk ship.” The way you win the game, I gathered, was to insure that anyone who wants to ship scrap out of New York or Los Angeles would have to sell it to your company.

Dienst explained that he is not, like so many of the leaders of the scrap industry, from an old-time scrap family. In 2001, he was working for what's known on Wall Street as a “vulture capital” firm—a group of bankers and lawyers who take over troubled or bankrupt companies and try to salvage value from them, while helping themselves to a generous percentage of the remaining assets. Usually, the situation is an unhappy one; Dienst knew that a restructuring job was complete when “everyone felt equally miserable.” Dienst had become a specialist in steel-industry bankruptcies; there were a lot in the late nineties. “I had done maybe fifty steel-company restructurings, and I never wanted to be in the steel business,” he said. Steel, once the premier American industry, is saddled with crushing legacy costs, and is subject to strict environmental regulations. The scrap business, on the other hand, requires relatively little investment, has lower labor costs, and has generally remained below the radar of both regulators and, until recently, investors. Dienst had never

thought much about it before he was given the job of restructuring Metal Management, a scrap company that went bankrupt in 2000. "And I had the classic epiphany. I said to myself, 'Wow, this is a great business—and no one knows about it!' You are the major raw material for steelmaking, and you are sitting on top of the richest scrap resource in the world, right here in the U.S.A.—that's a great place to be. You have these characters; it's gritty. But it's also green—you're taking a wastelike product and making something utilitarian out of it. There's something noble about it." Most people think of scrap dealers as part of the over-all waste industry, but in fact the scrap and garbage trades are more like opposites. The garbage man has a financial incentive to throw things away, because he is paid in pickup fees. The scrap man, on the other hand, is paid only for what he doesn't throw away. "Every last squeal of the pig," as they say in the trade.

Michael Henderson, a vice-president of operations, joined us in the office, and we put on hard hats and went for a tour of Metal Management's three yards and nearby port. At Hawkins Street, we drove around the piles of metal, some five thousand tons in total—all of which, Henderson said, would be at the docks in the next twenty-four hours. Some of the scrap was still recognizable as former products—so-called "white goods," like refrigerators and stoves and air-conditioners. Cars, which are processed at the nearby Doremus Avenue yard, are turned into shred—clean, high-quality steel that is loose enough to "charge" the steel mill's furnace easily, so scrap dealers can demand a premium for it. In a typical charge, the steel mill mixes shred with H.M.S., or heavy melting scrap—large structural pieces, sheared into four-foot lengths, piles of which could also be seen in the yard—layering the heavy melt and shred like sliced potatoes and diced onions in an au-gratin casserole.

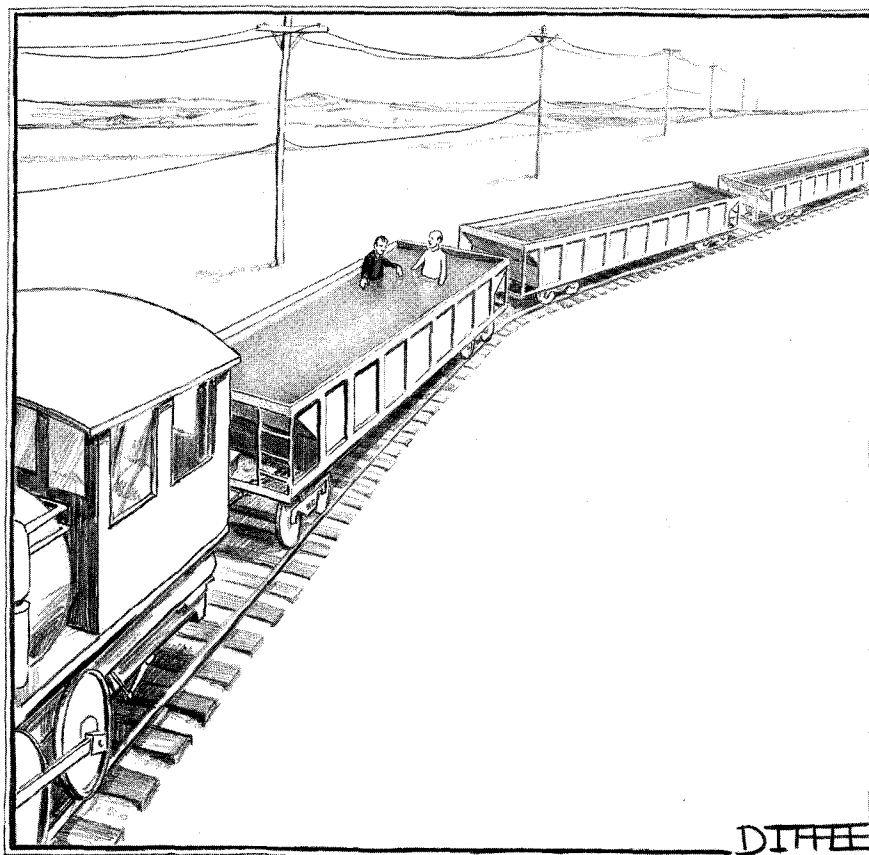
The nonferrous, or non-iron-bearing, metals had also been separated, and the copper had been further subdivided into grades. In the scrap trade, "barley" is the lariat-thick copper wire that is used for high-voltage electrical transmission in railroad signals, for exam-

ple—the best kind of copper scrap; "honey" is copper with brass in it; and "candy" is No. 1 copper tubing, which is used for household plumbing. The bushy copper coiling that makes up the heart of an electric motor is called a "meatball." The terms were coined by scrap dealers in the early twentieth century in order to conduct business by telegrams—short words were cheaper. The Institute of Scrap and Recycling Industries has codified the language into its technical specs, although the precise meaning of certain terms may vary from yard to yard.

We drove to Doremus Avenue and watched the shredder work for a while. This type of machine, which was invented by the Proler brothers—Hymie, Sammy, Jackie, and Izzy—in Houston in the late nineteen-fifties (they called it a Prolerizer), is standard equipment these days in any medium- to large-sized yard. Cars were being loaded by crane onto a conveyor belt and brought up to a staging area. The shredder operator then tipped a car into two hydraulically driven feed rolls that revolve in opposite directions and suck the car into

the shredder box. Inside, a rotor, which is powered by an electric motor, spins a dozen free-swinging steel hammers that smash down on the car, pulverizing it in less than a minute. The combination of torque and speed, Henderson explained, makes it possible to generate many pounds of force per square inch on the vehicle. After the car has been shredded, the shred passes through a number of "downstream" operations aimed at separating the metal from the "fluff"—chopped-up upholstery and dashboards. These include huge magnets, which pull the steel away from the rest of the shredded material; electromagnetism, which propels the big pieces of copper and aluminum away from the fluff; and water, which collects smaller pieces, like wires, at the bottom. Finally, at the "sorting line," a couple of workers watch for any remaining nuggets.

Dienst told me, with considerable excitement, that the shredder we were looking at, a twenty-year-old model, was about to be superseded by a much more powerful "mega-shredder." When operational, it would have the capacity to reduce a car to shred in seconds.



"Till now I always thought of the gravy train as a good thing."

The yards looked busy. Scrap was pouring in from many different sources: floating down the Hudson on barges; rolling in on rails, which were behind the yards; and entering in trucks, both large ones, owned by demolition companies, and small pickups, driven by "peddlers," as the individual scrap collectors are called. Some of their trucks looked not far from being scrap themselves. A steady stream of auto wreckers brought in flattened cars. At Doremus Avenue, all the metal comes in through one entrance, where it passes through a radiation scan. If the machine detects something, a siren and flashing lights go off, Henderson said. He added that it happens from time to time, though never intentionally; it might be tungsten from a scrapped X-ray machine that got mixed in with the rest of the scrap metal.

After the scan, the trucks are weighed, and the weighmaster radios to an inspector, who directs the drivers to one or another pile, depending on what kind of metal they're hauling. When the truck is empty, it's weighed again, and the driver is paid for the difference. Yards set prices about once a month, in general. The peddlers, who work for cash, can call around to smaller yards and try to get better prices than those offered at Foot of Hawkins Street, although at smaller yards the waiting can be longer. At Hawkins Street, peddlers are in and out in a hurry.

We came to a pile of "Zorba," which is the industry name for the heterogeneous mixture of aluminum and copper that remains after the shredded car has passed through the entire downstream operation—about four per cent of the total car. It is made of small twisted pieces of aluminum from transmission casings, mixed in with chopped-up copper wires. In order to be recycled, the aluminum needs to be further sorted into different grades, and small pieces of copper wire have to be picked out. Advanced flotation systems exist that can accomplish this, but it requires a lot of water, and it costs far more to operate the machine than it does to send the Zorba to China. "We can't afford do the hand sorting," Dienst said, "but we have our guy we sell to in Shanghai, Tony Huang. He does it. You've got to see Tony's operation. They have these women who go over it, picking out all the pieces of wire by hand."

Leaving the yard, we drove to the twenty-five-acre deep-water port, a few minutes away. In addition to shipping its own scrap from the port, Metal Management charges stevedore fees for handling other cargoes; currently, it was offloading road salt that was being brought in for the winter. A large pile of Ukrainian rails was waiting to be shipped to a rerolling mill in the South, where the rails would be melted down and transformed into steel bed frames. We drove up to a high point, which was

a mountain made of road salt. From here, we could survey the entire operation. In the distance, one of the company's giant cranes was loading scrap directly into the hold of a ship bound for Turkey.

At the third yard, on Roanoke Avenue, we came at last to the mega-shredder. As we approached it, Dienst and Henderson began hopping around in their seats like ten-year-old Giants fans who were about to meet Michael Strahan. In eight hours, the mega-shredder can process twenty-four hundred ferrous tons with a density in excess of eighty pounds per cubic foot—or about three hundred Cadillacs an hour. And that, Dienst said, "is a lot of grunt." The operator's cabin was four stories high, and the downstream operations were so extensive that they filled up a vast building. A nine-thousand-horsepower electric motor drove the hammers; it would be one of the single largest draws on the Newark power grid when it came online. The final wiring was taking a lot of time. "We don't want Cory Booker's office to go dark," Dienst said, referring to Newark's mayor. He said that he expected the mega-shredder to be up and running in a couple of weeks, and invited me to come back and watch it feed. "I myself can't wait," he said.

Scrap metal is as old as metalcraft itself. Copper smelting is thought to have begun about seven thousand years ago, in the Middle East. Taking elements from the earth and refining them into metals is so basic to civilization that we refer to eras in human history as the Bronze Age and the Iron Age. Through its highs and lows, civilization has always included a scrap trade, and, unlike the arts and sciences, the scrap business has thrived in times of both darkness and enlightenment. The profession is founded on an inviolable truth: almost all the metal that has ever existed in the world still exists, and always will exist. Iron may rust, but the rust is still metal. (Scrap dealers collect rust from sandblasted trains, and sell it to steel mills to use in the furnace charge.) Metal takes a form—an I-beam, an airplane's hull, a paperclip, a bed-spring—and it has a lifespan. In the U.S., the average car lasts a dozen years, while a lawnmower's life expectancy is seven years—four years longer than a leaf blow-



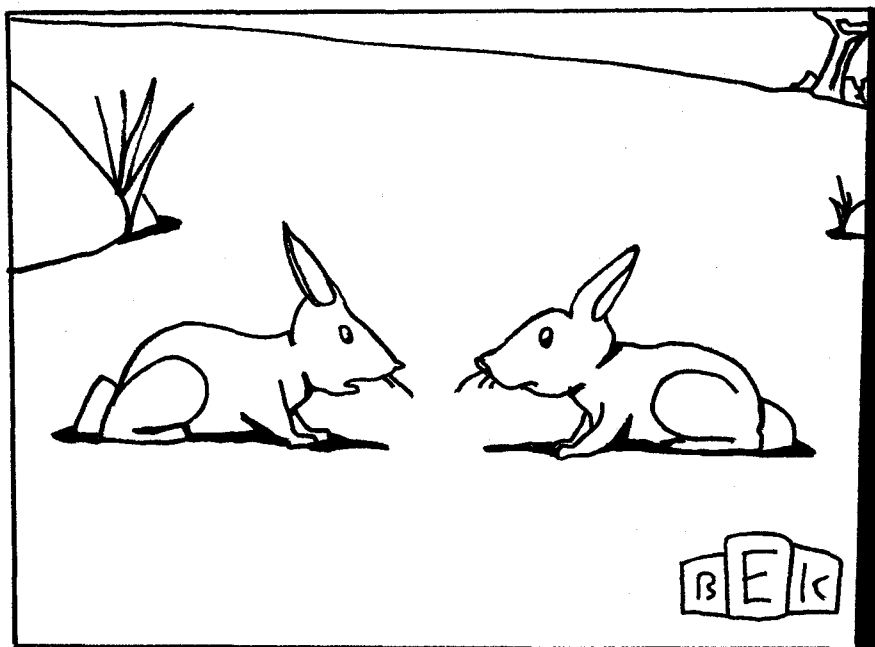
"If anyone asks, I didn't hear about the big beef recall."

er's. River barges last twenty-five years, on average; steel-truss bridges last fifty. But no matter how ingenious the fabricator has been in using the metal, sooner or later it will belong to the scrap man. "It's all inventory," Bill Heenan, the president of the Steel Recycling Institute, a trade association, said to me recently. "You might drive by the Golden Gate Bridge and say, 'Wow, what a beautiful bridge,' but I go by that bridge and I say, 'Wow, look at all that inventory.'"

The scrap dealer has a vested interest in a uniquely unsentimental outlook on human endeavor. The destruction of the World Trade Center freed up more than a hundred thousand tons of high-grade inventory, much of it handled by Metal Management. Hurricane Katrina was a similar bonanza for some Southern scrap dealers. The collapse of Saddam Hussein's Army and infrastructure in Iraq produced a great deal of scrap, and thanks to a scrap-export ban imposed by the Iraqi government, in 2004, most of the metal remains in the country; it is the raw material for Iraq's future steel industry. Unfortunately, looters tore up most of Iraq's existing steel mills and sold them for scrap, so they'll have to be rebuilt first.

Many of the larger independent scrap-metal businesses around the U.S. trace their roots back to immigrants, who came to America in the late nineteenth century or the early twentieth, and scrounged the countryside looking for discarded farm equipment, which they sometimes carried on their backs to a metal recycler. These itinerant ragmen and peddlers were familiar figures in turn-of-the-century America: in addition to scrap metal, they took in rags, which were used in paper-making, and bones, which were ground to make gelatin, often bartering with needles, utensils, and tin-plated pans and pots. In "Waste and Want," a history of trash in America, Susan Strasser writes, "Peddlers—traveling with huge backpacks, hand pulled carts, beasts of burden, and horse-drawn wagons—became a major institution of nineteenth-century distribution and took their place at the center of the recycling system."

Over the next two generations, the businesses founded by these peddlers grew into the scrap fortunes of America. Because of the weight of the product, and



"I'm telling you, you need to try interval hopping."

the cost of shipping, which cut into slim margins, the business was necessarily regional. Every big port city had a scrap family or two. In New York, it was Hugo Neu and his son John Neu, a cosmopolitan man who walks with a cane and cuts a Sydney Greenstreet-like figure. In Chicago, there were the Cozzi brothers, who in the late nineteen-nineties merged with Metal Management. In Portland, there were the Schnitzers, whose patriarch, a Russian immigrant named Sam, founded a one-man scrap business called the Alaska Junk Company in 1906; last year, the firm traded in more than four million tons of metal. In the scrap man survived some type of original American entrepreneur—Jefferson's yeoman farmer, tending not his land but his junk pile, doing just as he pleased.

Nathan Frankel is a thirty-four-year-old scrap dealer in Fontana, California, fifty miles east of Los Angeles. There's scrap in his family going back three generations. He is thin and artistic-looking, and has none of Dan Dienst's brashness; he's shy but somehow bold in his shyness. His grandfather, who was also named Nathan, emigrated from Russia in 1917, and became a ragpicker and peddler outside Buffalo, New York. In the late nineteen-forties,

"the old man" brought his family west, following Route 66 from Chicago, with the idea of founding a scrap business in the agricultural land east of Los Angeles. He forged relationships with farmers in the high and low desert, buying their old farming equipment and hay-baling wire (metal was used in place of twine in those days) and household junk, and bringing it first to a yard in Riverside, and later to a yard outside San Bernardino. His son, Leo, who was born in 1930, joined his father in the business in the mid-fifties, and they opened FIMCO (Frankel Iron and Metal Company) on a five-acre yard in Fontana, in 1961. They had a baler and a "snippy," a device for cutting up cars, and, in 1971, they built a shredder at a second, five-acre yard, a few miles away. The old man, who had had a serious heart attack in 1959, died in 1968, of pulmonary edema, and Leo took over the business. His daughter, Nadia, was born in 1970, followed by his son, Nathan, in 1973.

During the war, Fontana had been transformed from Fontana Farms—a "Grapes of Wrath"-type oasis of little orchards, which drew settlers from the East—into a thriving mill town, as a result of the mighty Kaiser Steel company, which was opened by the industrialist

Henry Kaiser in 1942 on thirteen hundred acres. Kaiser, the first integrated mill west of the Rockies, provided steel plate for the West Coast shipbuilding industry. Manufacturers of everything from steel file cabinets to steel buckets to chain-link fences grew up around Fontana, and so did large machine shops that serviced steelmaking equipment. There were dozens of auto-wrecking yards for vehicles from as far away as Nevada and Utah. With all this scrap around, the Frankels prospered. In the nineteen-fifties, a rebar-making company called Etiwanda (which is today called Tamco) built an electric-arc furnace in Fontana, and it became a reliable buyer of FIMCO's metal.

The sixties and seventies were a glorious time to be in scrap. Americans were throwing things away at a historically unprecedented volume. With government-mandated recycling programs still a decade away, tons of metal was simply discarded, and what the scrap dealers couldn't take went into landfills. The consumer society put the earlier, pre-consumer system of rag-saving and recycling to rout. As a development boom hit Fontana—the first of several—the number of consumers tripled. The Santa Ana winds swept down over the new developments, filling the air with dust. For Joan Didion, and later for Mike Davis, the place was a model of a California warped by greed and development. "This is the California where it is easy to Dial-A-Devotion, but hard to buy a book," Didion wrote of the region in the nineteen-sixties.

In the mid-seventies, cheap steel flowed into California from Japan, and Kaiser quickly declined. It went bankrupt in 1983, laying off the last of its nine thousand workers. (U.S. Steel and Bethlehem Steel, which, like Kaiser, ran integrated mills, suffered similar economic problems: the former shut most of its mills in the nineteen-eighties; the latter closed its vast Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, operation in 1995.) The decline of Kaiser didn't hurt the Frankel scrap business—it profited from the dismantling of the steel mill—but, according to FIMCO's former manager, Victor Vollhardt, it did hurt the town of Fontana. "This was a close-knit community, when people worked around here," he

told me. "But the politicians drove local businesses out, because people don't like to be around industry, and replaced them with all these malls and fast-food places and what have you, and forced people to drive into L.A. to work, and when people have spent three hours in the car they don't go to PTA meetings and community-oriented things—and so the community falls apart." Leo Frankel moved the family to Orange County in 1984, and Nathan went to high school in Newport Beach.

As a kid, Nathan loved hanging around the scrapyard. His father's small workforce was like a family, and Leo was known throughout the area for his fairness. Nathan learned from him that the scrap business should be about standing by your agreements, fulfilling promises, and delivering what you contracted to deliver, even if it means losing money. "I would drive there with my father in the morning and spend the day taking apart old machines," Nathan recalled. Using pieces of a scrapped motorized food-packing machine, he built a contraption that opened and closed his bedroom door automatically. He took special interest in the old mainframe computers that began to turn up in the yard as smaller computers gained popularity. He could spend the whole day tinkering, but his father made certain that he also practiced the violin in the office, which embarrassed Nathan. Leo was a self-trained violinist who played in the San Bernardino Symphony Orchestra, and his greatest ambition for his son was for him to be a distinguished violinist. Nathan was talented, though Leo thought he never practiced enough.

Frankel went to Brandeis University, where he majored in economics and was the orchestra's concertmaster. But after graduating, in 1995, he went to work in his father's yard. "I was eager to modernize everything about the scrap business—bring it into the digital age," he said. "But my dad thought what I

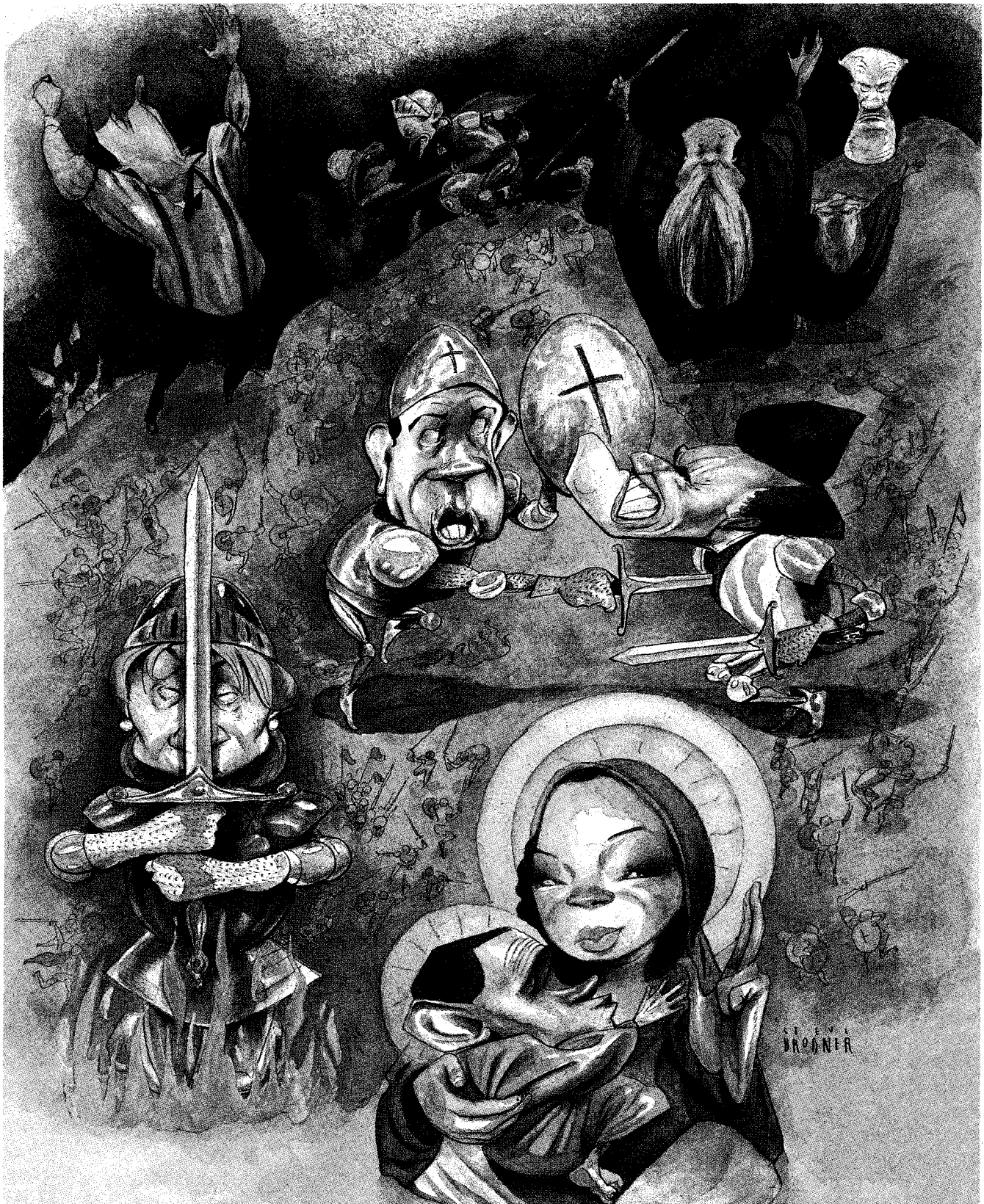
should do was work in the yard, doing menial jobs, because that's the only way you can appreciate the foundation of the business.

"One day, about two months after I started, I was working on the sorting line on the shredder when I noticed there was this big piece of copper stuck between the belt and one of the rollers, and it was starting to push the belt off the roller. I thought if I stuck my hand in I could grab it and pull it out. I got hold of it, but my sleeve got caught in the roller, and before I really knew what was happening it had pulled my arm into the machine, and my face and shoulder were pressed up against the guard—and then I realized that it was going to pull my arm off. I could feel the skin under my armpit beginning to be pulled apart and this terrible stretching and it felt like things were snapping in there." He screamed and the next guy down the line hit the emergency stop. Some of the scrap workers carried him into the office and called his father, who was at a conference in Los Angeles, and told him there had been an accident, then took Nathan to the hospital. "I was throwing up and I was in shock—my arm was just dangling at my side and I couldn't feel it," Frankel said. "At the hospital, they got out all the metal that had been ground into my skin. But the next day I had no feeling at all in my arm."

The radial nerve had been crushed, and there was a good chance that the feeling in his arm would never return. To test if the nerve was regenerating, doctors regularly inserted a needle into Frankel's shoulder and sent an electrical impulse through the damaged nerve, attaching another electrical clip to his fingers that would receive a signal if the nerves were regrowing. For months, his fingers were dead to the signal. The situation seemed hopeless. Leo was devastated by the possibility that he had ended his son's violin career by forcing him to work in the yard. Finally, six months after the accident, the doctors picked up a signal in Frankel's fingers. About a year after the accident, he was able to play the violin again, and now he plays as much as he can (but never at the office). Not long ago, I heard Frankel play the violin part of Brahms's Piano Quartet in G Minor, at his place in



SKETCHBOOK BY STEVE BRODNER



We take our text from the Book of Iowa, 20:08, clockwise. It came to pass that Hillary of Ark was consumed by her own prairie fire. And William Jennings Edwards summoned the Angel of Populism. And, yea, St. Rudy slew the beast marked 9/11 once more. And Moses McCain led Brother Aaron Lieberman in the parting of the Red States, whereupon Fred which is called Thompson became like unto a pillar of salt. And it came to pass that Huckabee of Ark went forth and dealt Mitt the Mormon, son of George, a mighty blow. And, lo, the Virgin Oprah brought forth a child, which is called Obama, and the prophets of punditry were sore confounded.



"And, in addition, you get a generous signing bonus."

Hancock Park, leading a group of three students from the Colburn School, in L.A. They sounded terrific.

In the early nineteen-nineties, a wave of consolidation swept through the garbage business. Small garbage carters were acquired by several big companies, the largest of which was Waste Management. These companies had the resources to do long-distance garbage transportation, which became important for cities like New York, where the last local landfill, at Fresh Kills, on Staten Island, closed in 2001.

By the end of the decade, the garbage business had been successfully consolidated, and the industry was looking for new ways to grow. To some investors, the obvious next move was the scrap-metal business. In the middle to late nineties, Metal Management was put together by some executives from the waste industry, who were backed by private-equity firms. By leveraging the value of the scrap in its yards, Metal Management borrowed money and expanded, but its timing was terrible: beginning in the summer of 1997, a financial crisis gripped a

large part of Asia, and the value of metals plummeted. Metal Management couldn't meet its debt payments, and the company went bankrupt. As Dan Dienst explained the company's problems to me, "The garbage guys said, 'They have scrap, we have waste. They use trucks, we use trucks. They have scrapyards, we have transfer stations. They take it to a steel mill, we take it to a landfill—it's the same thing.' But it was a flawed analogy. The big difference was that their business was based on fees from people whose garbage they were picking up. It was a dependable cash flow that you can borrow money against reliably. But in the scrap business the capital is your metal in the yard, and that's a commodity, which means the value can change." Indeed, the scrap business is a commodity founded on other commodities—the price of steel, the cost of shipping, and the relative values of currencies—which makes scrap especially sensitive to changes in the national and global economy. Alan Greenspan, the former chairman of the Federal Reserve, once said that he didn't need to study a lot of economic indicators to sense where the

economy was headed; he needed only to look at scrap-metal prices.

As part of that first wave of incorporation, Sims, the Australian company, bought Leo Frankel's two Fontana yards in 1998. Frankel recalled, "My father came to me and said, 'Do you want to run this business?' And I honestly could say that I didn't." An ardent foodie and an oenophile, Frankel was planning to open a restaurant. But, soon after the company was sold, Frankel and his father began to hear complaints from their former employees and co-workers and clients. Victor Vollhardt told me, "The manager Sims appointed was in over his head trying to run two yards at the same time." He added that corporate decision-making doesn't work in the scrapyards. "Nathan's dad did everything based on trust, a handshake, and that was it. But at Sims trust had been replaced by the new way of doing things, which was based on corporate bureaucracy."

When Frankel heard how unhappy his father's former employees and customers were, and how badly Sims was apparently managing the yards, he was roused from a Hamlet-like indecision about what to do with his life and decided to start his own scrap business. Borrowing money from some acquaintances, Frankel, then twenty-five, started on a rented three-acre lot in north Fontana in 1999. He rebuilt his father's old metal baler and began gathering scrap from local small industries. Later, he added a guillotine shear, for chopping large structural pieces, and started courting some of his father's former clients. In 2001, his business, Advanced Steel Recovery, moved to its present location, in south Fontana, not far from his father's old yards. He hired Vollhardt to be his manager, as well as a number of his father's other employees. Leo, however, was legally barred from assisting his son, because of a non-compete clause he had signed when he sold to Sims. Leo Frankel died of colon cancer in 2002, at the age of seventy-one.

The south side of Fontana looks like a massive truck stop. Trucks bring containers from the L.A. docks full of Chinese goods, and unload them in gigantic warehouses on the outskirts of town. Most of the containers were going back to China empty, and Frankel wondered if there was a way of sending them back

packed with scrap. Container shipping would allow independent, inland operators like Frankel to sell scrap directly to steel mills overseas, without having to sell it through the big companies like Sims and Metal Management, which owned the ports. And because it costs only a few hundred dollars to send a container back to China (it costs much more to bring it here, because the demand is much higher), it is cheaper to send the scrap to China than to ship it by rail to domestic steel mills, most of which are east of the Rockies. But loading containers took a lot longer than loading the hold of a ship. Also, the scrap tended to damage the sides of the containers.

One day, Frankel had an idea for a more efficient and less destructive container loader. He drew a sketch on a napkin. It looked like a big metal sleeve. A container-size hopper, open at the top, is filled by a crane, and wheels on the bottom allow it to slide all the way into the container. Then, while pressure from the detachable back wall of the loader keeps the scrap in place, the sides and floor of the loader retract, leaving the metal inside. In 2004—eight months and a million dollars after that sketch—the first FASTek (for Frankel Advanced Shipping Technology) was operating in his yard. Today, Frankel owns five machines, and leases three of them—one to a scrap dealer in Bakersfield, another to a yard in L.A., and the third to a dealer in Phoenix. With the machine, one man can load a container in fifteen minutes. Frankel's business has switched from being exclusively domestic to ninety-five-per-cent international—he sends his scrap all over Asia. Thanks to the FASTek, the little guy doesn't have to sell to the big guy; he can participate directly in the global recycling economy.

Dienst told me that he doesn't see Frankel's idea as a threat to his business model, but he quickly added that his company could focus on containers, too, even if they didn't have a FASTek to do it with. "Just because something looks sexy doesn't make it cost-effective," he said, with his confident smile. "Look at my wife."

Frankel, for his part, would like to find partners from outside the scrap business, perhaps in another commod-

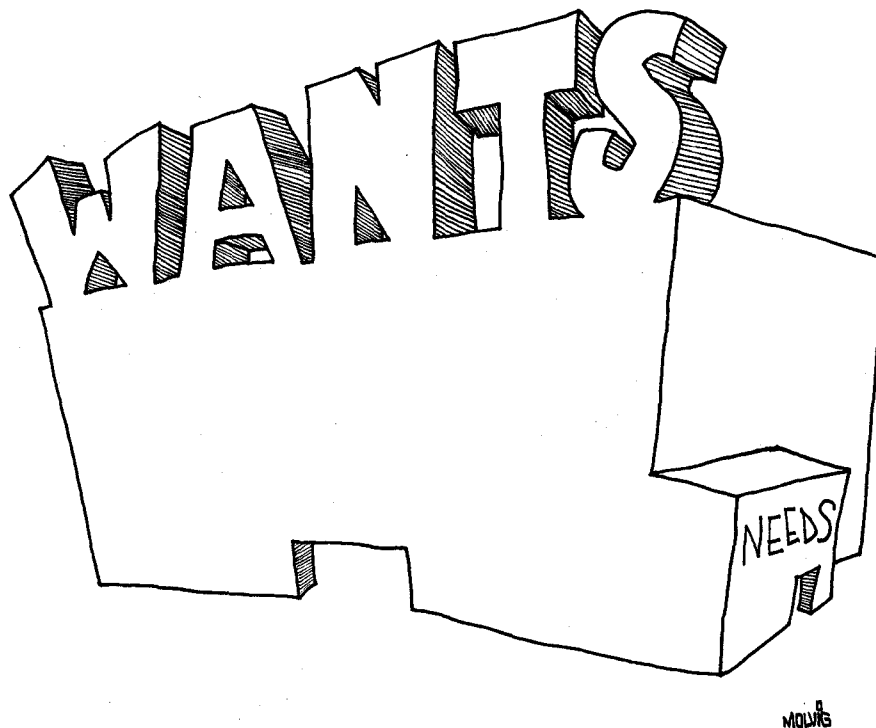
ity business, to help him expand. "Opportunities are still enormous—we're just scratching the surface globally," he said. However, he also seemed ambivalent about his future in the scrap business. The second time I visited his yard, Frankel had recently come back from meeting with Asian steel-mill owners in Singapore, Korea, Taiwan, Malaysia, and Thailand, and the trip didn't sound like it had been much fun. "I'm still not really sure how it happened," he said. "People like my grandfather got into scrap because it required no investment, no education—just hard work. For me, it's not the same. I could do other things. I don't think my genetic destiny is to do scrap for the rest of my life. But it's what I'm doing now, so I am putting everything I can into it."

Most of the scrap metal that goes to China is turned into materials for the Chinese construction industry—rebar, beams, and floor decking. That steel flows into the skyscrapers sprouting all around Chinese cities and into new factory towns; the copper is used to wire the millions of houses being built for China's new middle class. (In this sense, China's industrial might is literally being constructed out of the ruins of our own.) But much of the aluminum returns to the U.S., in the engine casings

of new cars, as well as in irons, coffee pots, grills, and frying pans, among millions of other consumer products, which are loaded into containers and shipped back to the ports in Newark and L.A.—to be bought, used, and thrown away all over again.

To trace the circle travelled by metal as it makes its way through the global recycling economy, I arranged to follow some of Metal Management's Zorba to its Chinese recycler. From Newark, the Zorba—the unsorted pile of aluminum and copper that comes out of the shredder—was loaded into a tilted container using a crane (far less elegantly than with a FASTek) and from there onto a Panamax vessel, which passed through the Panama Canal. Two weeks later, the container arrived at the port in Shanghai. It was loaded onto a truck and taken to an industrial area in north Shanghai, which is the corporate campus of Sigma, the largest recycler of aluminum in China.

Sigma's founder and chairman, Yaw Bin (Tony) Huang, was born in Taiwan. He went to Cornell for graduate work in food science, and when he received his degree, in the late seventies, he started two businesses: one exporting mullet roe to Taiwan, and the other a nonferrous-scrap business in New Jersey, which he later moved to Florida.



He didn't own a yard—he bought from scrap dealers and sold the aluminum and copper in Taiwan. Over the years, the scrap business grew much bigger than the roe business. After fifteen years in America, he moved back to Taiwan. He is married to a Taiwanese woman and has two sons; one works in scrap in L.A., and the other is finishing an M.B.A. at Columbia University. In 1993, Huang expanded his business to mainland China, because the cost of labor was much lower than in Taiwan. The company flourished, and in 2005 he opened a ninety-acre plant in north Shanghai, which is where the Metal Management Zorba was trucked and then dumped into large bins.

I met Huang when he took me out for a night on the town in Shanghai. "C.E.O. stands for 'chief entertainment officer,'" he said, and his laugh was followed by an explosive, throat-clearing cough. He explained that, like all private businessmen in China, he has to devote considerable time and attention to entertaining government officials, so that he can continue to operate more or less as he pleases. In a restaurant on the fifty-fifth floor of the Jin Mao Tower, in Pudong, with the city's sparkling Whoville of skyscrapers spread before us, we dined on Peking duck and Shanghai's famous hairy crabs, which are in season in October. Dinner was followed by a trip to the Paradise Club, a karaoke "hostess bar." We were given a private room in what appeared to be a large building with many such rooms, and we each selected a woman—Shirley for me and Mimi for Huang—from a lineup of a dozen. Then, settling into soft couches, we took up the mikes. Tony performed a solo version of "My Way," and he sang it as if he meant it. Then Shirley and I did a duet to the Carpenters' 1973 hit, "Yesterday Once More." *Every shing a ling a ling.* . . . In an informal survey conducted by a Chinese radio station in 2006, nearly a third of the listeners said that the first English song they learned was "Yesterday Once More." Shirley didn't need to look at the words on the screen:

But they're back again, just like a long
lost friend
All the songs I loved so well!

The next morning, that Carpenters tune was back again, just like a long-lost

SEEING WHALES

You can go blind, waiting

Unbelievable quiet
except for their
soundings

Moving the sea around

Unbelievable quiet inside you, as they change
the face of water

The only other time I felt this still was watching Leif shoot up when we were
twelve

Sunlight all over his face

breaking
the surface of something
I couldn't see

You can wait your
whole life

The Himalayas are on the move, appearing and disappearing in the snow in
the Himalayas

Mahler
begins to fill
the half-dead auditorium
giant step by
giant step

The Colorado
The Snake
The Salmon

My grandfather walks across the front porch

friend in my head, as I was driven from my hotel in the center of the city into the morning rush hour that clogs the overhead highways; the great commercial engine that is Shanghai was waking up to another day of money-making. Arriving at the Sigma plant, the driver crossed a moat that surrounded the property, and a uniformed guard at the gate saluted me. I saw a large parking lot, which had only a few cars, belonging to management, and a small covered shed that was jammed with the bicycles of the two thousand workers. It was a

gray day, but the wind was blowing and the air was clear.

Huang took me to his office, which was airy and spotless and featured several large pieces of abstract art that he had picked out himself. "Cheap artist," he said, shrugging, when I mentioned them. Huang speaks English in gruff, somewhat percussive bursts of words, dispensing with most articles. He handed me a company brochure, and, under the heading "Working in Paradise," I read about the plant's amenities: a soccer field, a basketball court, a

spotted with cancer, smoking
a black cigar

The whales fold themselves back and back inside the long hallways of salt

You have to stare back at the salt
the sliding mirrors
all day

just to see something
maybe

for the last time

By now they are asleep
some are asleep
on the bottom of the world
sucking the world in
and blowing it out
in wave-
lengths

Radiant ghosts

Leif laid his head back on a pillow and waited for all the blood inside him
to flush down a hole

After seeing whales what do you see?

The hills behind the freeway

power lines

green, green
grass

the green sea

—Michael Dickman

marina, waterfalls, and exotic plants. There's even a karaoke bar, but "no girls," Huang said. The canals and the moat are filled with purified rainwater. There are tilapia in the water, he said, and the workers and Huang himself catch and eat them. It's a way of inspiring everyone to do a good job of keeping things clean, Huang explained, because "otherwise we get hurt first!"

We toured the facilities in a stylish golf cart. The grass and leaves around the huge sorting shed, where the Zorba had been taken, were covered with a

thin layer of aluminum dust. Inside the open-walled shed, four hundred women, working in groups of twenty, surrounded fifteen-foot piles of metal. The women wore gloves and masks and white uniforms. They picked through the pieces by hand, sorting the aluminum into different grades (these also have colorful industry names—"tense," "twitch," "taint/tabor"), and each grade had its own bucket. They also separated out small pieces of copper wire and whatever else they might find in the Zorba—American coins,

left in gummy car ashtrays, were not uncommon. I asked how much the women were paid. A thousand yuan a month, which is about a hundred and forty dollars, Huang said. He doesn't want men to do the job: "Men don't have the concentration for this type of work."

Men, wearing blue uniforms, worked on the smelting side of the operation. They loaded the sorted grades of metal into the furnace, and on the other side bright, thin streams of liquid metal ran out of pipes and into ingot molds, with a slightly metallic liquid sound—a silvery *shing a ling a ling*.

As we left the smelting shed, I noticed two life-size metal heads, which had clearly been severed from their bodies, sitting on posts beside the road, and asked who they were.

"Those heads of Lenin and Stalin," Huang replied. He didn't seem concerned about the ideological influence that the heads might have over his workers; he was more sheepish about having given up inventory for sentimental reasons. "My workers found the heads in a load of Russian scrap and I guess it's O.K. they keep it," he said.

In 2006, when copper briefly hit a record price of four dollars a pound, it was driven both by demand from Asia and supply concerns in some of the world's large copper-producing areas—Indonesia and Central and South America. At that price, the U.S. penny became worth more as scrap metal than as coinage. The U.S. Mint received several queries about whether it is legal to melt down pennies and nickels on a large scale. In December, 2006, foreseeing a potential run on the penny, the U.S. Mint issued new rules against melting the coins down.

The threat to the penny is only one of the unlikely social consequences of an era of higher metal prices. Earlier this year, police broke up a scrap ring in Albany: five men were stealing wire out of electrical substations and suburban railyards, and selling the copper. In May, 2006, a huge fire at the Greenpoint Terminal Market, on the Brooklyn waterfront, was caused by homeless men who were burning the plastic coating off copper wires; the plastic-free wires earn more in the scrapyard. In

graveyards around the country, the metal plaques marking graves of Revolutionary War soldiers are disappearing, because a pound of bronze goes for a dollar and eighty cents. (In a scrapyard in Vancouver, an undercover officer was given five dollars for a bronze marker for a four-year-old child.) A metal street sign might bring a dollar; a manhole cover fetches about five. Beer kegs, swiped from behind an Applebee's, bring upward of forty dollars each. A phone booth will net fifty dollars or more. A condenser unit from a central-air-conditioning system is worth about a hundred dollars. Aluminum bleachers, guardrails, streetlight poles, storm-drain grates, copper flashing, and the nozzles of firehoses are also popular among metal thieves.

In the U.K., lead theft from church roofs is rampant. Bronze statues have been sawn off at the ankles and carted out of public parks. The former Olympic running champion Steve Ovett suffered this indignity in September, when a life-size bronze replica of him, in full stride, disappeared from Preston Park, in Brighton. (Police recovered a leg from a nearby bonfire.) In the U.S.,

a seven-foot bronze statue of the Buddha was recently stolen from an outdoor temple shrine at the Thai Buddhist Center, in Elk River, Minnesota. The problem is even worse in Eastern Europe, where, in Ukraine, scrap thieves stole a thirty-six-foot metal bridge from the Svalyavka River, in 2004.

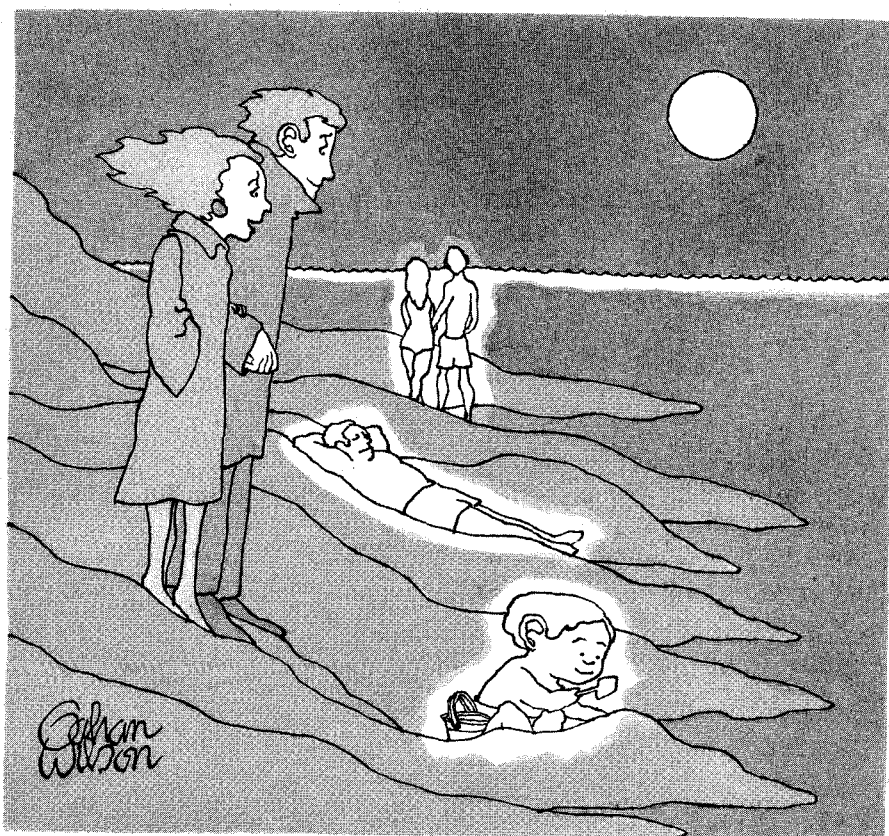
Who is buying all this hot metal? The Institute of Scrap and Recycling Industries blames fast-buck artists who aren't legitimate scrap dealers. However, anyone with a phone and a blowtorch can get into the scrap business. Metal Management would not buy obviously hot scrap, but by the time the scrap has been processed by another dealer the yard bosses might not recognize it. Also, container shipping makes it possible to move scrap in and out of the yard quickly, and get it on its way to Asia fast, before authorities can come looking for it. The I.S.R.I. suggests that dealers ask to see an I.D., note license plates, and pay with a check, but it opposes measures, already enacted in several states, that require dealers to keep scrap for a period of time before reselling it. These "tag and hold" statutes are

unpopular among scrap dealers, because they subject the scrap in the yard to changes in commodity prices between the time the dealers buy the scrap and the time they can sell it, and that's the way scrap guys go under.

Metal theft seems like hard work—it's often heavy, and it's dangerous. "We had one in Kentucky up on the pole recently," Mike Dunn, the manager of security services at American Electric Power, told *CSO*, a trade magazine for security executives, earlier this year. "He cut the wrong wire, got wrapped up in the lines and just hung there upside down, dead, until someone passed by and noticed." So why do so many people steal metal? The *CSO* reporter, Scott Berinato, noted that "hot spots of crystal meth abuse—Hawaii, the Southwest, San Diego, Oregon, and increasingly the rural Midwest and South—map to hot spots of metal theft." One of the conditions of a meth high is extreme focus, which is just what you need to unravel lengths of copper wire from a tightly corded braid of other metals. Not only does meth give you the patience to do the job but the reward—money for more meth—is right there in the metal.

The global metal-theft epidemic conjures a Mad Max world of desperate people mining civilization's infrastructure—a postcard from a future era of commodity scarcity. Economists have written about the concept of Peak Oil—the point, thought to be a distant possibility, at which oil becomes so expensive that its production begins to decline, triggering a wave of new energy technologies, and a fundamental restructuring of industrial society. But perhaps that transformation will be brought about by Peak Metal, and it will happen sooner than we think.

Preparations for the mega-shredder took longer than Dienst had expected. His men worked on the wiring and final adjustments for months. Eventually, at 12:26 A.M. on November 16th, the plant staff fed a Mitsubishi into the mouth of the machine and it passed through all the complex downstream digestive organs: the drum-shaped magnet, which plucks the steel pieces from the rest of the material; the magnetic field, known as an "eddy current," which



"It's sweet how their presences linger on after the season."

flings larger pieces of aluminum and copper away from valueless debris; and the flotation system, which uses water to float bits of rubber and foam away from the Zorba.

James Mosebach, the over-all supervisor for the mega-shredder assembly, reported to Dienst in an e-mail, written at 3:04 A.M. that night, that the shred "looks really good and squeaky clean." He added, "We have a big, beautiful baby."

The following Monday was a damp, freezing day at Foot of Hawkins Street; a light rain made the metallic scent of the yard smell more chemical. Dienst was outside pacing when I arrived. "It's been that kind of day," he said, with a nervous peppiness. Carmine Agnello was due to be released soon, and I wondered if Dienst was worried about hearing from him—but that wasn't the problem. The price of metal had dropped the month before, and now the larger economy seemed to be following it—just as Greenspan said it would. But it wasn't that, either, Dienst said. I gathered it was just the general stomach-churning pressure of trying to impose a corporate structure on a business that has never been incorporated before.

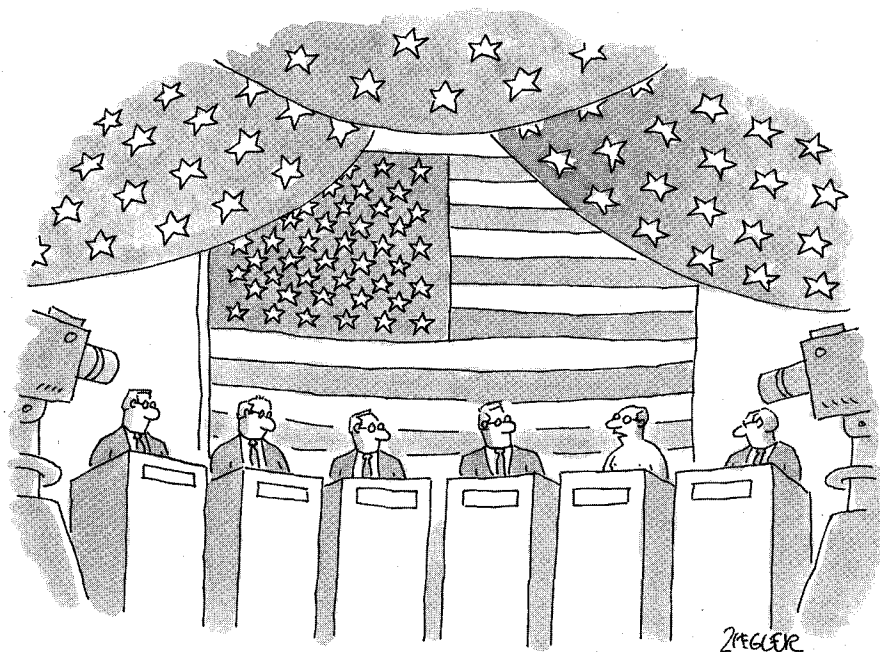
In the office, Mike Henderson brought in one of the pieces of shred from the Mitsubishi, and he presented it to Dienst. The shred felt cold and wet, and its torn edges were brutally sharp.

"That's one of the very first pieces," Henderson said.

"It's an honor," Dienst said, putting the steel down on the table.

"It's beautiful shred, Dan," Henderson said, with emotion. "Clean. Dense."

When I was in China, I had visited a Chinese scrapyards, operated by a private company called Fengli. It is situated at a big bend in the Yangtze River, about a hundred and fifty miles upriver from Shanghai, in Zhangjiagang, a giant factory city, built so recently that there's been no time to name all the streets. It is far larger than any scrapyards in the U.S., and it has two thousand workers. The day I visited, two hundred thousand tons of ferrous scrap were in the yard. With the Shagang steel mill, the largest private mill in China, thirty minutes away, the scrap did not have far



"Uh-oh. I think I'm having one of those dreams again."

to go. Fengli had no mega-shredder at the yard—it didn't need one. Instead, there were hundreds of men working at tables with alligator shears, cutting every piece of scrap by hand. The result looked like metal pasta. The mega-shredder, for all its grunt, couldn't do that.

Still, I was as excited as the rest of the Metal Management men; some kind of male pheromone was bouncing around the operator's cabin, which was directly above the mighty jaws of the machine. It was ready to take in a maroon Impala. But there were several delays. Looking out through the windows of the cabin, I could see the rail lines that defined the old Ironbound District. The turnpike and Routes 1 and 9 were ahead. Trucks were carrying new goods from the ports to the big-box stores, and other trucks were bringing old goods—scrap—to the yard. The global recycling economy was flowing all around us, and the beating heart of it—the mega-shredder—was about to be switched on.

There were more delays. At first, it was one of the belts, then it was downstream, with one of the magnets. While waiting, Dienst went out on the balcony. We discussed what would happen if the price of scrap suddenly dropped,

as it had ten years ago. "Bring it on," Dienst said, in his confident way. "I don't want to sound cocky, but we welcome the chance to prove that we can compete in any market."

We went back into the cabin, where the atmosphere was tense. I recalled hearing that one of the biggest problems in maintaining mega-shredders is to keep them from shredding themselves.

"O.K., they're jogging it"—trying to get a belt started—a worker in the cabin said, listening to his radio.

"It's just a teething problem," one of the engineers, who was on loan from the company that sold Metal Management the shredder, said soothingly.

"Well, why the heck didn't it have this problem Friday night?" Mosebach demanded.

"Maybe it's the rain," the engineer said, shrugging.

Finally, a voice on the radio said, "Ready to start!"

"We have liftoff!"

"Let's start shredding!"

The machine began to rumble, and the maroon Impala lurched halfway into the shredder box. The whole cabin shook. A cloud of smoke shot out, so thick that it obscured the jaws for a moment. When the smoke cleared, the Impala was gone. ♦



FICTION

WAKEFIELD

BY E. L. DOCTOROW

People will say that I left my wife and I suppose, as a factual matter, I did, but where was the intentionality? I had no thought of deserting her. It was a series of odd circumstances that put me in the garage attic with all the junk furniture and the raccoon droppings—which is how I began to leave her, all unknowing, of course—whereas I could have walked in the door as I had done every evening after work in the fourteen years and two children of our marriage. Diana would think of her last sight of me, that same morning, when she pulled up to the station and slammed on the brakes, and I got out of the car and, before closing the door, leaned in with a cryptic smile to say goodbye—she would think that I had left her from that moment. In fact, I was ready to let bygones be bygones and, in

another fact, I came home the very same evening with every expectation of entering the house that I, we, had bought for the raising of our children. And, to be absolutely honest, I remember I was feeling that kind of blood stir you get in anticipation of sex, because marital arguments had that effect on me.

Of course, the deep change of heart can come over anyone, and I don't see why, like everything else, it wouldn't be in character. After having lived dutifully by the rules, couldn't a man shaken out of his routine and distracted by a noise in his back yard veer away from one door and into another as the first step in the transformation of his life? And look what I was transformed into—hardly something to satisfy a judgment of normal male perfidy.

I will say here that at this moment I love Diana more truthfully than ever in our lives together, including the day of our wedding, when she was so incredibly beautiful in white lace with the sun coming down through the stained glass and setting a rainbow choker on her throat.

On the particular evening I speak of—this thing with the 5:38, when the last car, where I happened to be sitting, did not move off with the rest of the train? Even given the sorry state of the railroads in this country, tell me when that has happened. Every seat taken, and we sat there in the sudden dark and turned to one another for an explanation, as the rest of the train disappeared into the tunnel. It was the bare,

DIANA KINGSLEY, "THE SLEEPING" (1997)



fluorescent-lit concrete platform outside that added to the suggestion of imprisonment. Someone laughed, but in a moment several passengers were up and banging on the doors and windows until a man in a uniform came down the ramp and peered in at us with his hands cupped at his temples.

And then when I do get home, an hour and a half later, I am nearly blinded by the headlights of all the S.U.V.s and taxis waiting at the station. Under an unnaturally black sky is this lateral plane of illumination, because, as it turns out, we have a power outage in town.

Well, it was an entirely unrelated mishap. I knew that, but when you're tired after a long day and trying to get home there's a kind of Doppler effect in the mind, and you think that these disconnects are the trajectory of a collapsing civilization.

I set out on my walk home. Once the procession of commuter pickups with their flaring headlights had passed, everything was silent and dark—the groomed shops on the main street, the courthouse, the gas stations trimmed with hedges, the Gothic prep school be-

hind the lake. Then I was out of the town center and walking the winding residential streets. My neighborhood was an old section of town, the houses large, mostly Victorian, with dormers and wraparound porches and separate garages that had once been stables. Each house was set off on a knoll or well back from the street, with stands of lean trees dividing the properties—just the sort of old establishment solidity that suited me. But now the entire neighborhood seemed to brim with an exaggerated presence. I was conscious of the arbitrariness of place. Why here rather than somewhere else? A very unsettling, disoriented feeling.

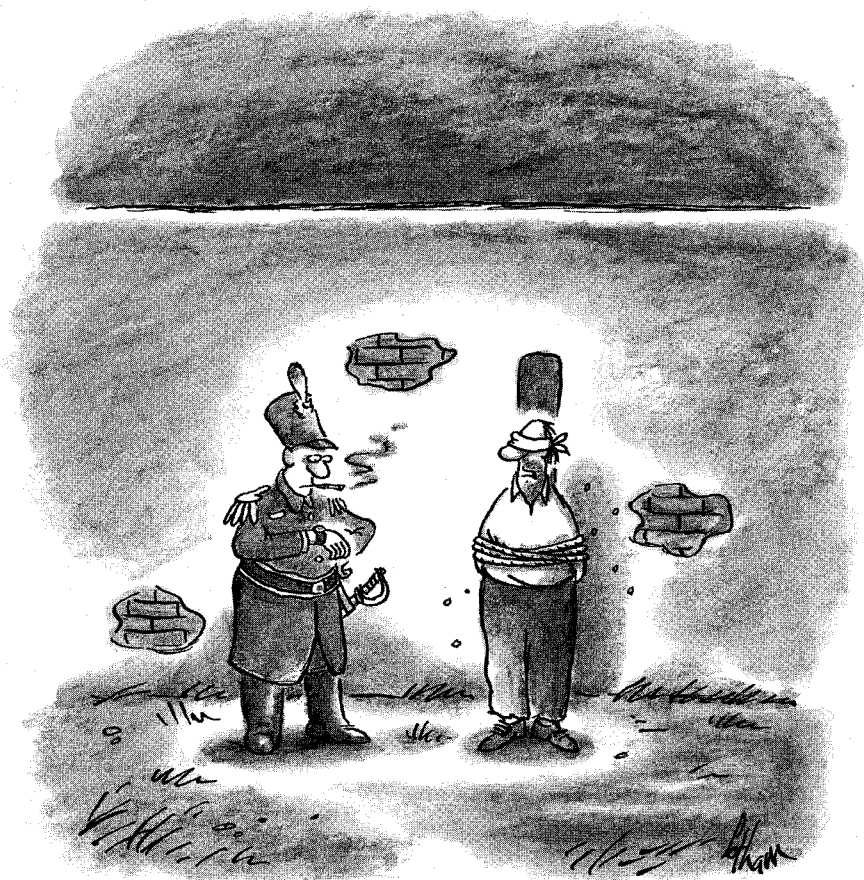
A flickering candle or the bobbing beam of a flashlight in each window made me think of homes as supplying families with the means of living furtive lives. There was no moon, and under the low cloud cover a brisk unseasonable wind ruffled the old Norwegian maples that lined the street and dropped a fine rain of spring buds on my shoulders and in my hair. I felt this shower as a kind of derision.

All right, with thoughts like these

any man would hurry to his home and hearth. I quickened my pace and would surely have turned up the path and mounted the steps to my porch had I not looked through the driveway gate and seen what I thought was a moving shadow near the garage. So I turned in that direction, my footsteps loud enough on the gravel to scare away whatever it was I had seen, for I supposed it was some animal.

We lived with animal life. I don't mean just dogs and cats. Deer and rabbits regularly dined on the garden flowers, we had Canadian geese, here and there a skunk, the occasional red fox—this time it turned out to be a raccoon. A large one. I have never liked this animal, with its prehensile paws. More than the ape, it has always seemed to me a relative. I lifted my litigation bag as if to throw it and the creature ran behind the garage.

I went after it; I didn't want it on my property. At the foot of the outdoor stairs leading to the garage attic, it reared, hissing and showing its teeth and waving its forelegs at me. Raccoons are susceptible to rabies and this one looked



"If your guys aren't going to show, let's just call it a day."

mad, its eyes glowing, and saliva, like liquid glue, hanging from both sides of its jaw. I picked up a rock and that was enough—the creature ran off into the stand of bamboo that bordered the back yard of our neighbor, Dr. Sondervan, who was a psychiatrist, and a known authority on Down syndrome and other genetic misfortunes.

And then, of course, upstairs in the attic space over the garage, where we stored every imaginable thing, three raccoon cubs were in residence, and so that was what all the fuss was about. I didn't know how this raccoon family had got in there. I saw their eyes first, their several eyes. They whimpered and jumped about on the piled furniture, little ball-like humps in the darkness, until I finally managed to shoo them out the door and down the steps to where their mother would presumably reclaim them.

I turned on my cell phone to get at least some small light.

The attic was jammed with rolled-up rugs and bric-a-brac and boxes of college

papers, my wife's inherited hope chest, old stereo equipment, a broken-down bureau, discarded board games, her late father's golf clubs, folded-up cribs, and so on. We were a family rich in history, though still young. I felt ridiculously righteous, as if I had fought a battle and reclaimed my kingdom from invaders. But then melancholy took over; there was enough of the past stuffed in here to sadden me, as relics of the past, including photographs, always sadden me.

Everything was thick with dust. A bull's-eye window at the front did not open and the windows on either side were stuck tight, as if fastened by the cobwebs that clung to their frames. The place badly needed airing. I exerted myself and moved things around and was able then to open the door fully. I stood at the top of the stairs to breathe the fresh air, which is when I noticed candlelight coming through the stand of bamboo between our property and the property behind ours, that same Dr. Sondervan's house. He boarded a num-

ber of young patients there. It was part of his experimental approach, not without controversy in his profession, to train them for domestic chores and simple tasks that required their interaction with normal people. I had stood up for Sondervan when some of the neighbors fought his petition to run his little sanitarium, though I have to say that in private it made Diana nervous, as the mother of two young girls, that mentally deficient persons were living next door. Of course, there had never been a bit of trouble.

I was tired from a long day, that was part of it, but, more likely suffering from some scattered mental state of my own, I groped around till I found the rocking chair with the torn seat that I had always meant to recane, and, in that total darkness and with the light of the candles slow to fade in my mind, I sat down and, though meaning only to rest a moment, fell asleep. And when I woke it was from the light coming through the dusty windows. I'd slept the night through.

What had brought on our latest argument was what I claimed was Diana's flirtation with someone's house guest at a back-yard cocktail party the previous weekend.

I was not flirting, she said.

You were hitting on the guy.

Only in your peculiar imagination, Wakefield.

That's what she did when we argued—she used the last name. I wasn't Howard, I was Wakefield. It was one of her feminist adaptations of the locker-room style that I detested.

You made a suggestive remark, I said, and you clicked glasses with him.

It was not a suggestive remark, Diana said. It was a retort to something he'd said that was really stupid, if you want to know. Everyone laughed but you. I apologize for feeling good on occasion, Wakefield. I'll try not to feel that way ever again.

This is not the first time you've made a suggestive remark with your husband standing right there. And then denied all knowledge of it.

Leave me alone, please. God knows you've muzzled me to the point where I've lost all confidence in myself. I don't relate to people anymore. I'm too busy wondering if I'm saying the right thing.

You were relating to him, all right.

Do you think with the kind of relationship I've had with you I'd be inclined to start another with someone else? I just want to get through each day—that is all I think about, getting through each day.

That was probably true. On the train to the city, I had to admit to myself that I'd started the argument willfully, in a contrary spirit and with some sense of its eroticism. I did not really believe what I had accused her of. I was the one who came on to people. I had attributed to her my own wandering eye. That is the basis of jealousy, is it not? A feeling that your congenital insincerity is a universal? It did annoy me, seeing her talking to another man with a glass of white wine in her hand, and her innocent friendliness, which any man could mistake for a come-on, not just me. The fellow himself was not terribly prepossessing. But it bothered me that she was talking to him almost as if I were not standing there beside her.

Diana was naturally graceful and looked younger than she was. She still moved like the dancer she had been in college, her feet pointed slightly outward, her head high, her walk more a glide than something taken step by step. Even after carrying twins, she was as petite and slender as she had been when I met her.

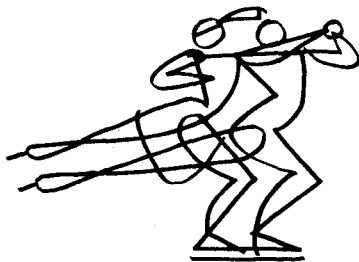
And now in the first light of the new day I was totally bewildered by the situation I had created for myself. I can't claim that I was thinking rationally. But I actually felt that it would be a mistake to walk into my house and explain the sequence of events that had led me to spend the night in the garage attic. Diana would have been up till all hours, pacing the floor and worrying what had happened to me. My appearance, and her sense of relief, would enrage her. Either she would think that I had been with another woman or, if she did believe my story, it would strike her as so weird as to be a kind of benchmark in our married life. After all, we had had that argument the previous day. She would perceive what I told myself could not possibly be true—that something had happened predictive of a failed marriage. And the twins, budding adolescents, who generally thought of me as someone they were unfortunate to live in the same house

with, an embarrassment in front of their friends, an oddity who knew nothing about their music—their alienation would be hissing expressive. I thought of mother and daughters as the opposing team. The home team. I concluded that for now I would rather not go through the scene I had just imagined. Maybe later, I thought, just not now. I had yet to realize my talent for dereliction.

When I came down the garage stairs and relieved myself in the stand of bamboo, the cool air of the dawn welcomed me with a soft breeze. The raccoons were nowhere to be seen. My back was stiff and I felt the first pangs of hunger, but, in fact, I had to admit that I was not at that moment unhappy. What is there about a family that is so sacrosanct, I thought, that one should have to live in it for one's whole life, however unrealized one's life was?

From the shadow of the garage, I beheld the back yard, with its Norwegian maples, the tilted white birches, the ancient apple tree whose branches touched the windows of the family room, and for the first time, it seemed, I understood the green glory of this acreage as something indifferent to human life and quite apart from the Victorian manse set upon it. The sun was not yet up and the grass was draped with a wavy net of mist, punctured here and there with glistening drops of dew. White apple blossoms had begun to appear in the old tree, and I read the pale light in the sky as the shy illumination of a world to which I had yet to be introduced.

At this point, I suppose, I could have safely unlocked the back door and scuttled about in the kitchen, confident that everyone in the house was still asleep. Instead, I raised the lid of the garbage bin and found in one of the cans my complete dinner of the night before, slammed upside down atop a plastic bag and held in a circle of perfect integrity, as if still on the plate—a grilled veal



chop, half a baked potato, peel side up, and a small mound of oiled green salad—so that I could imagine the expression on Diana's face as she had come out here, still angry from our morning argument, and rid herself of the meal gone cold that she had stupidly cooked for that husband of hers.

I wondered now at what hour had she lost patience. That would be a measure of whatever slack she granted me. Another woman might have refrigerated the dinner, but I lived in Diana's judgment; it shone upon me as in a prison cell where the light is never turned off. I lacked interest in her work. Or I was snide and condescending toward her mother. Or I wasted beautiful fall weekends watching dumb football games on television. Or I wouldn't agree to have the bedrooms painted. And if she was such a feminist why did my opening a door for her or helping her on with her coat matter so much?

All I had to do was stand outside my home in the chill of the early morning in order to see things in their totality: Diana felt that she had married the wrong man. Of course, I didn't imagine I was the easiest person to get along with. But even she would have to admit that I was never boring. And, whatever problems we had, sex, the crucial center of our lives, wasn't one of them. Was I under an illusion to think that that was the basis of a sound marriage?

Given these thoughts, I could not bring myself to walk in the door and announce that I was home. I made my breakfast of the congealed veal chop and the potato as I sat out of sight behind the garage.

I had met Diana when she was dating my best friend, Dirk Richardson, whom I had known since middle school. Because she was going with him, I looked at her more closely than I might have otherwise. I registered her as pretty, of course, very attractive, with a lovely smile, light-brown hair pulled back in a ponytail, and what the merest glance could affirm was a fine body, but somehow it was Dirk's interest in her, which was clearly of the most intense kind, that made me consider Diana as a potentially serious relationship for myself. At first, Diana wouldn't go out with me. But when I told her I had got permission

from Dirk to ask her out she relented, obviously from feelings of hurt and bitterness. Of course, I had lied. When eventually she and Dirk realized my perfidy, things became bitter all around, and in the ensuing competition, many months in duration, the poor girl was torn between us and, all told, we made the unhappiest ménage you could imagine. We were all children, the three of us, what—barely out of Harvard Law, in my case? And Dirk with an entry-level Wall Street job? And Diana working for a Ph.D. in art history? Young, self-styled Upper East Siders. There were times when Diana wouldn't see me, or wouldn't see Dirk, or wouldn't see either of us. Of course, in retrospect, it's clear that all this was quite the normal thing, when, adrift in their harmonic tides, people in their twenties are about to land on one shore or another.

I didn't know if, before I broke into their relationship, Diana had been sleeping with Dirk. I knew now that she was sleeping with neither of us. One day, in a stroke of genius, I told Dirk that I had spent the previous night with her. When he confronted her, she denied it, of course, and, showing his lack of insight and understanding of the quality of the person he was dealing with, he didn't be-

lieve her. That was his fatal error, which he compounded by trying to press himself on her. Diana was not a virgin—no body was by our age—but, as I was later to learn, neither did she have much experience, though that quality of sexy innocence I have mentioned could easily have passed for it. At any rate, you didn't try to force yourself on this woman if you ever expected to see her again. His second mistake, Dirk, before he disappeared from our lives altogether, was to punch me out. He was the heavier of us, though I was the taller. And he landed a couple of good ones before someone pulled him off me. That was the first and last time I've ever actually been hit, though I've been threatened a few times since. But my black eye brought out a tender resolution of Diana's feelings for me. Perhaps she understood that all my tactical cunning was a measure of my devotion, and, as her cool lips brushed my bruised cheek, I could not imagine myself ever having been happier.

After we had been married for a year and some of the energy had gone out of the relationship, I did wonder if my passion might have been pumped up by the competition for her. Would I have been all that crazy about her had she not been my best friend's girl? But then she be-

came pregnant and a whole new array of feelings entered into our marriage and, as her belly swelled, she became more radiant than ever. I had always liked to draw—I drew seriously as late as my freshman year at Harvard—and my knowledge of art had been one of the things that attracted her to me. Now she allowed me to draw her as she posed naked, with her small breasts fruited out and her belly gloriously ripened, as she lay back on some pillows with her hands behind her head and turned on one hip with her legs slightly pulled up but pressed together for modesty, like Goya's "Maja."

I spent that first day watching through the bull's-eye window for the sequence of events that would occur when it became clear that I had gone missing. First, Diana would get the twins off to school. Then, the minute the bus had turned the corner, she would call my office and satisfy herself that I had been seen off by my secretary at the usual time the night before. She would ask to be notified when I showed up for work, her voice not only under control but doggedly cheerful, as if she were calling about a minor family matter. I reasoned that only after a call or two to whichever of our friends she thought might know something would the panic set in. She would look at the clock, and, around eleven, steel herself and call the police.

I was wrong by half an hour. The squad car came up the driveway at eleven-thirty, by my watch. She met the patrolmen at the back door. Our town police are well paid and polite and they are not very different from the rest of us in their distant relationship to crime. But I knew that they would take down a description, ask for a photo and so on, in order to put out a missing-persons bulletin. Yet, when they were back in their car, I saw through the windshield that the cops were smiling: where else were missing husbands to be found but in St. Bart's, drinking piña coladas with their *chiquitas*?

All that was wanting now was Diana's mother, and by noon she was up from the city in her white Escalade—the widow Babs, who had opposed the marriage and was likely now to say so. Babs was what Diana, God help us, might be thirty years hence—high-heeled, ceram-



icized, liposucted, devaricosed, her golden fall of hair as shiny and hard as peanut brittle.

In the days following, cars pulled up at the house at all hours as friends and colleagues came to show their support and to console Diana, as if I had died. These wretches, hardly able to restrain themselves in their excitement, were making victims of my wife and children. And how many of the husbands would hit on her the first chance they got? I thought about bursting in the door—Wakefield arisen—just to see the expression on their faces.

Then the house grew quiet again. There weren't many lights on. Occasionally, I'd see someone for a moment in a window without being able to tell who it was. One morning after the school bus had stopped to pick up the twins, the garage doors below me rolled up and Diana got in her car and went back to her curator's job at the county art museum. I was hungry, having lived off scraps in our garbage and neighbors' garbage, and also fairly rank at this point, so I slipped into the house and availed myself of its amenities. I ate crackers and nuts from the pantry. I was careful when showering to rinse out my towel, put it in the dryer, and return it, properly folded, to the linen closet. I stole some socks and briefs on the theory that there were drawers full and a few missing would not be noticed. I thought about taking a fresh shirt and another pair of shoes but decided that that would be risky.

At this stage, I still worried about money. What would I do after I had spent the slender amount of cash in my wallet? If I wanted to disappear completely, I could no longer use my credit cards. I could predate a check and cash it at the downtown branch of our local bank, but when the month's statement came Diana would see it and think that my abandonment of my family had been premeditated, which, of course, it had not.

Early one evening, at that time of day when the apple blossoms release their lovely scent, Diana came out to stand in the back yard. I watched her from my garage atelier. She took a blossom from its branch and put it to her cheek. Then she looked around, as if she had heard



something. She turned this way and that, her glance actually passing over the garage. She stood there as if listening, her head slightly tilted, and I had the feeling that she almost knew where I was, that she had sensed my presence. I held my breath. A moment later, she turned and went back inside, and the door closed and I heard the lock click. That loud click was definitive. It sounded in my mind like my release into another world.

I felt the stubble on my chin. Who was this fellow? I had not even thought about what I had left behind in my law office—the cases, the clients, the partnership. I became almost giddy. There would be no more getting on the train. Below me in the garage was my beloved silver BMW 325 convertible. Of what use was it to me? I felt uncharacteristically defiant, as if I were about to roar and pound my chest. I did not need the friends and acquaintances accumulated over the years. I no longer required a change of shirt or a smooth, shaven face. I would not live with credit cards, cell phones. I would live how I might on what I could find or create for myself. If this were a simple abandonment of wife and children, I would have written Diana a note, telling her to find a good lawyer, taken my car out of the garage, and been

on my way to Manhattan. I would have checked in to a hotel and walked to work the next morning. Anyone could do that, anyone could run away; he could go as far as he could go and still be the same person. There was nothing to that. This was different. This strange suburb was an environment in which I would have to sustain myself, like a person lost in a jungle, like a castaway on an island. I would not run from it—I would make it my own. That was the game, if it was a game. That was the challenge. I had left not only my home; I had left the system. This life in the glittering eye of the prehensile raccoon was what I wanted, and never had I felt so absolutely secure, as if the several phantom images of myself had resolved into the final form of who I was—clearly and firmly the Howard Wakefield I was meant to be.

For all my exuberance, I did not fail to understand that I might have left my wife but I would still be able to keep an eye on her.

Of necessity, I was now a nocturnal creature. I slept in the garage attic by day and went out at night. I was alert and sensitive to the weather and the amount of moonlight. I moved from yard to yard, never trusting sidewalks or streets. I learned much about people in the neigh-

borhood, what they ate, when they went to sleep. As spring turned to summer and people left on vacation, more of the houses were empty and there were fewer opportunities for trash-can forage. But then there were fewer dogs to bark at me as I passed under the trees, and, where the dog was big, so was the dog door, and I could crawl in and avail myself of the canned and packaged foods in kitchen pantries. I never took anything but food. I felt an equivalence, but not seriously, to the Native American buffalo hunter who slew the creature for his meat and fur and thanked his risen soul afterward. I really had no illusions about the morality of what I was doing.

My clothes began to show wear and tear. I was growing a beard and my hair was longer. As August approached, I realized that if Diana wanted to do what we had done for many years she would rent the house we liked on the Cape and take the girls there for the month. In my garage den, I took pains to restore the disarray. I planned to sleep out of doors until they came up there for the life jackets, the pontoon float tube, the swim fins, the fishing rods, and whatever other summer junk I had bought so obediently. With a keen sense of dispossession, I wandered out of the neighborhood to find someplace to sleep, and discovered that I had barely begun to use the resources available to me when I came upon an undeveloped piece of land as wild as I could wish. It took me a moment to recognize, in the dim light of a half-moon, that I was in the town's designated Nature Preserve, a place where elementary-school children were taken to get an idea of what an unpaved universe looked like. I had brought my own children here. My law firm had represented the wealthy widow who had deeded this land to the town with the provision that it be kept forever as it was. Now its true wildness loomed before me. The ground was soft and swampy, fallen tree branches lay over the paths, I heard the obsessive self-hypnotizing cicadas, the gulp of the bullfrogs, and knew with an animal sense only lately developed in me that there were some four-footed creatures about. I found a small pond at the bottom end of these woods. It must have been kept fresh by an underground stream, because the water was cold and clear. I stripped and bathed myself and put my clothes back

on over my wet body. I slept that night in the crotched trunk of a dead old maple tree. I can't say that I slept well; moths brushed my face and there was a constant stirring of unknown life around me. I was really quite uncomfortable but I resolved to see it through until such nights as this were normal for me.

Yet when Diana and the girls had gone on their vacation and I was able to reclaim my pallet in the garage attic, I felt despicably lonely.

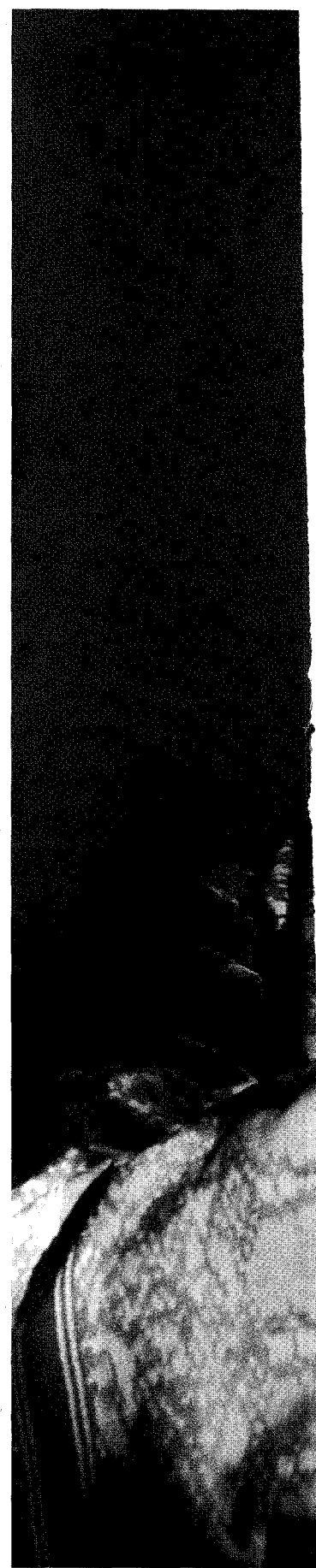
With my new death's-door look, I decided that I had at least an even-money chance to go about unrecognized. I was lean and long-bearded and with a shock of hair that fell down the sides of my face. As my hair grew out, I saw how barbering it in the old days had hidden its increasing grayness. My beard was even further along. I took myself in my tatters to the business district and availed myself of the town's social services. In the public library, which, not incidentally, had a well-kept men's room, I read the daily papers as if informing myself of life on another planet. I thought it was more my image to read the papers than to sit at one of the library computers.

If the weather was good, I liked to take up residence on a bench at the mall. I did not beg; had I begged, the security people would have shooed me off. I sat with my legs crossed and head up, and projected attitude. My regal mien proposed to passersby that I was a delusionary eccentric. Children would come up to me at the urging of their mothers and put coins or dollar bills in my hands. In this way, I was able occasionally to enjoy a hot meal at Burger King or a coffee at Starbucks. Pretending to be mute, I pointed to what I wanted.

I regarded these expeditions to the town center as daring escapades. I needed to prove to myself that I could take risks. While I carried no I.D., there was always the possibility that someone, even Diana herself, if back early from her vacation, might come by and recognize me. I almost wished that she would.

But after a while the novelty of these trips wore off and I reclaimed my residential solitude. I embraced my dereliction as a religious discipline; it was as if I were a monk sworn to an order devoted to affirming God's original world.

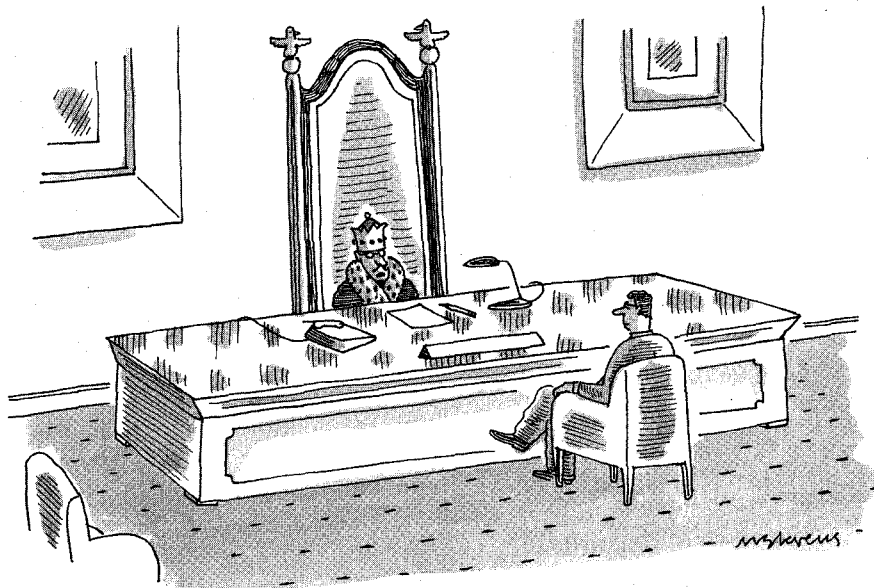
Squirrels travelled along the telephone



AT THE MUSEUMS *The photograph*



n, will be featured in "Close Encounters," a survey of his portraits at the Mo.



"My position here is largely symbolic."

wires, their tails rippling like signal pulses. Raccoons lifted the lids off the garbage pails left at the curb for the morning pickup. If I had preceded them at a pail, they knew immediately that there was nothing there for them. A skunk each night made its rounds like a watchman, taking the same route past the garage and through the stand of bamboo and diagonally across Dr. Sondervan's back yard, and disappearing down his driveway. At the preserve pond, my occasional swim was observed by a slick, slime-covered rat-tailed muskrat. His dark eyes glowed in the moonlight. Only when I had climbed out of the pond did he dive into it, silently, with no apparent disturbance of the water. Most mornings, invader crows arrived, twenty or thirty of them at a time coming out of the sky and cawing away. It was as if loudspeakers were strung in the trees. Sometimes the crows would go quiet and send out reconnaissance, one or two of them circling and landing in the street to examine a candy wrapper or the dregs of a garbage can that the sanitation men had emptied incompletely. A dead squirrel was occasion for a feast, a great black mass of fluttering feathers and bobbing heads stripping the carcass down to its bones. Altogether they were a kind of crow state, and if there were any dissidents I could not find them. I did dislike it that they drove away the smaller birds—a pair of cardinals, for example, who

nested in the back yard, and didn't have the range of these ravenous black birds who would be off as quickly as they had come, in powerful flight to the next block or the next town.

There were house cats always on the prowl, of course, and dogs barking late at night in one house or another, but I did not see them as legitimate. They were sheltered; they lived at the behest of human beings.

One night in early autumn, with the swampy ground of the Nature Preserve papered with fallen leaves, I was hunkered down to examine a dead snake about a foot in length whose color I thought might in life have been green, when, as I stood, I felt something brush the top of my head. As I looked up I saw the wings of a ghostly pale owl fold into his body as he disappeared into a tree. The feathery touch of the owl wing on my scalp left me shivering.

These creatures and I either were food to one another or were not. That was all there was to it. I was presumptive from my loneliness, an unrequited lover as incidental to all of them as they had once been to me.

Diana was always comfortable in her body and was careless about covering herself in front of our girls. She didn't mind being seen in the nude, and when I suggested that it might not be the best

thing for them she replied that, on the contrary, it was instructive for them to see how naturally accepting and unself-conscious a woman could be about her physical being. Well, then, how about a man, if they were to see me walking around in the altogether? I said. And Diana said, Really, Howard, Mr. Prude in the nude? Not a chance.

In our bedroom, Diana seemed not to care if the blinds were open when she was dressing or undressing. I was always the one to close them. Who are you trying to attract? I would say to her, and she'd say, That very good-looking fellow out there in the apple tree. But she seemed as oblivious of her effect nude in a bedroom window as she was when attracting men at cocktail parties. All this behavior was ambiguous and kept me wondering.

And now, though I was not up in the apple tree, I had found various salients in our half acre that allowed me to see a good deal of her at night, when she went to bed. It was always alone, I was satisfied to see. She would sometimes come right up to the window and stare into the darkness while brushing her hair. In those moments, with the light behind her, I would see her lovely shape only in silhouette. Then she would turn and walk back into the room. A long-waisted girl with narrow shoulders and firm buttocks.

Oddly enough, seeing my wife in the nude usually got me thinking of her financial situation. I did this to assure myself that she would not find it necessary to sell the house and move elsewhere. Her salary at the museum was just adequate, and we had a mortgage, prep-school tuition for the twins—all the usual presiding expenses. On the other hand, I had set up a savings account in her name and had added to it regularly. My investments were in a revocable trust of which she as well as I was a trustee. And I had paid down a considerable part of the mortgage with my last year's partner's bonus. She might have to cut back on her clothes purchases and all the little luxuries she enjoyed, she would have to give up her hope of redoing the bathrooms in marble, but that was hardly to suggest her impoverishment. I was the impoverished one.

My spying was not restricted to her bedtime. Now in the autumn it grew

dark earlier every day. I liked to know what was going on. I would hunker down in the garden foliage under the windows and listen to the conversation. There she would be in the dining room, helping the twins with their homework. Or they would all three be putting together their dinner. Never once did I hear my name mentioned. Arguments I could hear from the very edge of the property, one of the twins, screeching and stamping her foot. A door would slam. Sometimes Diana came out on the back porch and lit a cigarette, standing there holding her elbow, the hand with the cigarette pointing at the sky. That was news—she had quit the habit years before. Sometimes she was out for the evening and all I could see were the flickering colored lights of the TV in the family room. I didn't like it that she left the twins alone. I kept watch at the bull's-eye window in my attic until I saw her car come up the drive.

On Halloween, the street was busy with parents escorting their cutely costumed children from one porch to another. Diana always prepared for the onslaught by buying tons of candy. All the lights were on in my house. I heard laughter. And here passing under the window of my garage attic were a few of Dr. Sondervan's patients. They had come through the bamboo, ambling down the drive, these larger children, carrying shopping bags for the treasures to be collected from somewhat uneasy neighbors receiving them at the front door.

Every two weeks, the town residents put out for trash their hard, non-organic items: old TVs, broken chairs, boxes of paperbacks, end tables, busted lamps, toys their children had outgrown, and so on. I had come away previously with a usable, only slightly torn and sperm-stained futon from this resource, as well as an old portable radio that looked as if it might work if I could find some batteries for it. I did miss music as I missed nothing else.

On this night I went looking for some shoes. Mine had worn away. They were falling apart. It was a damp night; it had rained in the afternoon and slick wet leaves were pressed to the streets. Timing was crucial: by one in the morning, anything that was going to be thrown

out was on the sidewalk. By two, anything that was usable was gone. On these nights, people from the south end of town cruised around in their old pickups or in cars that tilted to one side, and they'd pull up and, with their motors running, hop out to judge items, grabbing each thing for examination, to see if it met their exacting standards.

Some winding blocks away from my home base, I spotted in the light of a street lamp a promising trove—an unusually large pile of curbed junk that could have passed for an installation in a Chelsea gallery. It bespoke someone's desperation to move—stacks of chairs, open cartons of toys and stuffed animals, board games, a sofa, a brass headboard, skis, a desk with a lamp still clamped to it, and, underneath everything, layers of men's and women's clothing going damp in the dew. I was busy putting things aside and digging under the suits and dresses, and didn't hear the truck approach or the men get out, a pair of them, who were suddenly there beside me, two guys in sleeveless T-shirts to show off their muscular arms. They were talking to each other in some foreign language and it was as if I weren't there, because,

as they worked their way through the trove, lifting away the furniture to put in their truck, the cartons of toys, the skis and everything else, they got around rather quickly to the pile of clothes under which I had just found three or four shoeboxes and they pushed me aside to get at these things. Just a minute, I thought, having found a pair of white-and-tan wingtips, not my style at all, but they seemed in the moonlight to be right out of a store window and close to my size. I kicked off the sole-flapping holey pair I was wearing. At this point, I had no reason to think that these scavenger men were anything but boors. Now it appeared that a woman was with them, who was wider and heavier in the arms than they were, and, as I stood there, she decided that my pair of shoes, too, should be theirs. No, I said. Mine, mine! The shoebox was wet and, with each of us pulling, it came apart and the shoes dropped to the ground. I grabbed them before she could. Mine! I shouted and slapped them together, sole against sole, in her face. She shrieked and a moment later I was running down the street with the two men chasing me and shouting curses, or what I assumed were curses,



"The good news is it's the size of a baseball."

great hoarse expletives that echoed through the trees and set dogs barking in the dark houses.

I found myself running well, a shoe stuck paddle-like over each hand. I heard heavy panting behind me, then a cry as one of the men slipped on the wet leaves in the street and went down. As I ran, I visualized the blunt faces of these people and decided that they were a mother and two sons. I supposed they made a business out of their collectibles. This was to be admired—entry-level work into the American dream. But I'd had them first—the shoes, I mean—and by the law of salvage they were mine.

Mine! I had said like a child. Mine, mine! These were the first words I had spoken in all the months of my dereliction. And as I uttered them I almost thought it was someone else speaking.

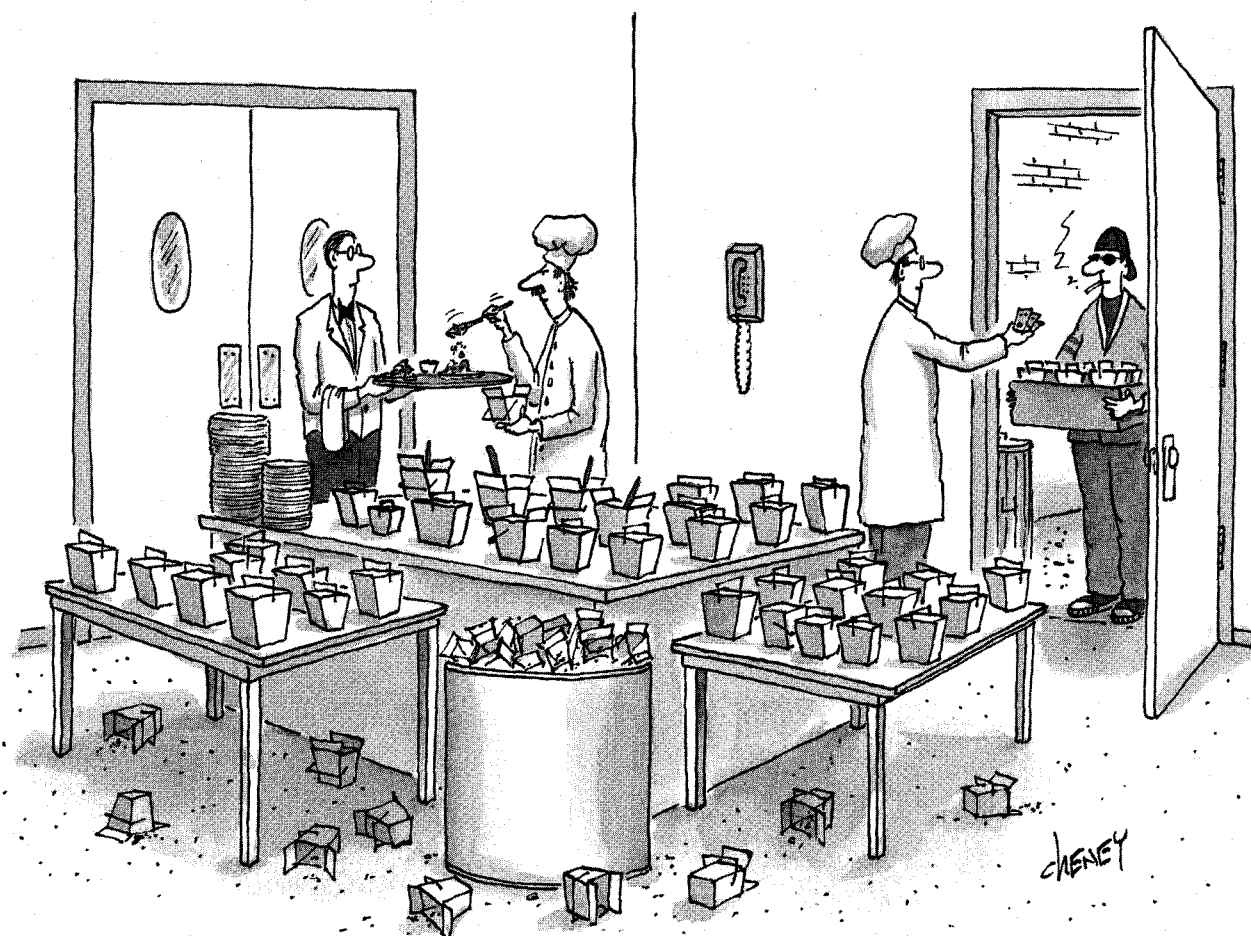
I had an advantage in knowing the neighborhood, and gained on my pursuit by cutting across yards and up driveways and through garden gates, punishing my tender wet feet every step of the way. I heard a rhythmic wheeze and realized that it was coming from my aching chest.

I didn't dare look behind me. I heard their truck somewhere on an adjoining street and imagined the mother, that sturdy peasant of a woman, behind the wheel, peering over her headlights for a sight of me. I was nearing my atelier now, coming up the back way through my neighbor Sondervan's yard. I reasoned that I did not want these people to know where I lived. Retribution could be theirs at any time they chose if they saw me climb the stairs to the garage attic. My solution was not entirely logical: as I approached the stand of bamboo, I veered off, and ducked down the three stone steps to the basement door of Sondervan's house.

The door was unlocked. I slipped inside and slid down against the wall and attempted to catch my breath. At the end of a short hallway was another door, indicated to me now by the light that came on behind it. The door opened and I had to raise my arms against the light. I must have made an odd picture, sitting there with each hand in a wing-tip shoe, as if that were how shoes were worn, because whoever was standing there began to laugh.

In this way, I became a familiar of two of the unfortunates who lived in the basement dormitory under the care of Dr. Sondervan.

One was a Down-synder by the name of Herbert. Emily, his pal, was the other—I don't know what she was, but she couldn't keep from smiling, out of unceasing happiness or a neurological glitch, but either way it was eerily unnatural. This bucktoothed girl with very thin hair, I couldn't tell her age—she might have been anything from fourteen to nineteen. She and Herbert, who was smaller in his proportions than he should have been, with a round head, slanted eyes, and a nose that looked as if he'd had a boxing career, seemed distinct from the four other patients down there, who were aloof, who took me in with a glance that first night and couldn't care less after that—teen-agers, apparently, three male, one female, physically normal-looking, compared with Herbert and Emily, but living in their own minds, with not much concern for what went



on around them. I assumed that they were a variety of autistics, though of course I knew nothing about autism, except what I had read in magazines or seen on television.

But Herbert and Emily loved me from the moment they saw me sitting there with the shoes on my hands, as if they had found someone mentally less fortunate even than they, who may not have known much but did know that shoes were more properly worn on the feet. They didn't ask what had brought me to their door, but welcomed me as one might a stray cat. From that first moment, they were solicitous and protective, instructing me to repeat their names after them to make sure I understood, and then asking my name. Howard, I said, my name is Howard.

They brought me a glass of water and Emily, giggling all the while, brushed the sweated thatch of hair from my forehead. Howard is a fine name, she said. Don't you love the autumn, Howard? I love the falling leaves, don't you?

They took the shoes from my hands and fitted them on my wet feet, Herbert, with his mouth open as befit his concentration, tying the laces, and Emily looking on as if it were a surgical procedure. Neatly done, Herbert, very fine indeed, she said. As soon as I judged it safe to go, they insisted on following me to my garage and watched as I climbed the stairs to make sure that I did not fall.

So now two of Dr. Sondervan's mental defectives knew about me. It would be a costly pair of shoes if they blabbed about Howard, the nice man who lived next door over the garage. There was not only the doctor but his staff, the three or four women who ran the household, to whom they might say something. I looked around the attic, my de-facto home. The only sensible thing to do was to leave. But how could I? While I struggled with this, I maintained a watch by day and didn't make my nightly forage until well past their lights-out.

A couple of mornings later, I saw Herbert and Emily and the others in the back yard. They were sitting on the ground, and there was Sondervan addressing them, like students in a class. The doctor was a tall but stooped man

in his seventies, with a gray goatee and black horn-rimmed glasses. I had never seen him without a jacket and tie, and in deference to the season he had added a short-sleeved sweater that served as a vest. I couldn't hear what he was saying, though I could hear his voice; a thin, high elderly man's voice, it was, but self-assured and with an almost smugly assumed authority. At one point, Herbert grabbed a handful of fallen leaves and tossed them up so that they rained down on Emily's head. She, of course, laughed, thus interrupting the lecture. The doctor glared. How normal this all was. Had Herbert and Emily revealed my whereabouts, wouldn't I by now have heard from someone—from Sondervan himself, or from Diana, or from the police, or from all of them, my little world crashing down on my head? I understood that for whatever reason, perhaps a dissident impulse that they might not even understand, the retarded children, if they were children, had decided to make me their secret.

It was odd—on the occasions when they could visit me safely, I enjoyed their company. I found my own mind comfortable with the reduced wattage that conversation with them required. They did see things, notice things. Their predominant emotion was wonder. Everything in the attic was examined, as if they were visiting a museum. Herbert opened and shut the brass snaps of my litigation bag over and over. Emily, digging in Diana's hope chest, came up with an antique silver hand mirror in which to study herself. Perhaps, not having spoken with another human being for some months, I was overly responsive, but I was happy to explain how a life jacket worked, and why the game of golf required many clubs, or how spiderwebs were made, or why I, yet another exhibit, lived here in this attic. I gave them the expurgated version of that: I told them that I was a wanderer, a hermit by choice, and that this attic was one stop on my life's journey. Then I had to assure them that I had no intention of moving on for quite some time.

I worried that they would be found missing back at their place, but somehow they knew when they could get

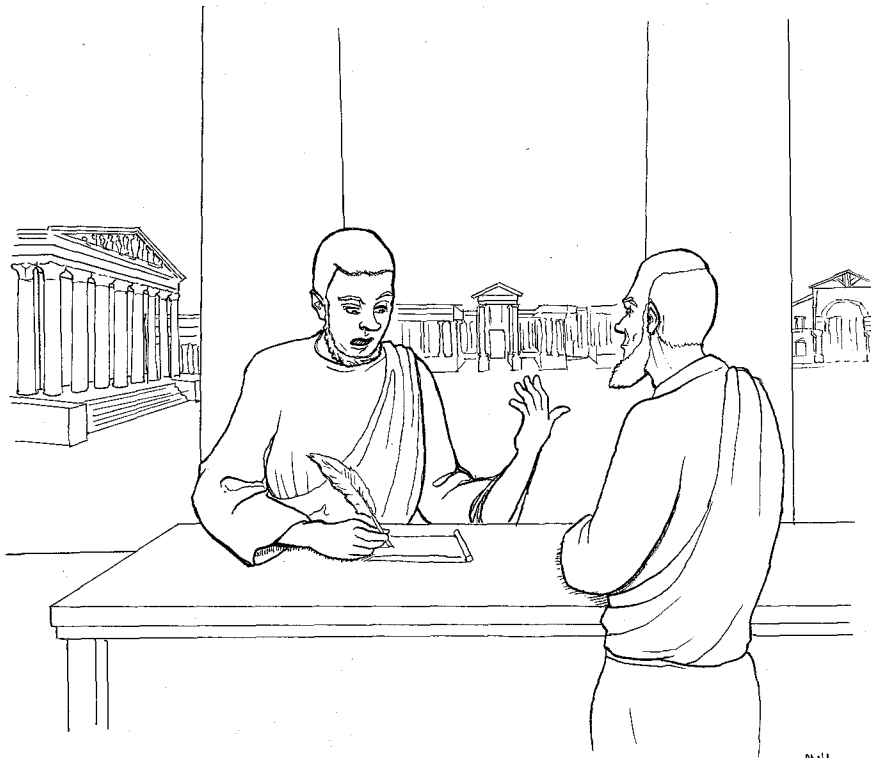
away safely. And they brought me things, little gifts of food and bottled water, knowing without my having to explain that I was a person in need. They would bring me a piece of cake and solemnly watch me eat it. Herbert, with his dark almond eyes in that globular head, had the most intense stare. He would hold himself at the shoulders and watch how my jaw moved. And Emily, of course, chattered on, as if she had to speak for both of them. Isn't that good, Howard? Do you like cake? What is your favorite? I like chocolate cake the best, though strawberry is good, too.

They may have been heartbreaking—and they were, casting me into the realm of remorseless normality—but in fact Herbert and Emily were there when I needed them. Sharply honed as my survival skills had become, some residual upper-middle-class indifference to the weather had left me unprepared for winter. What was thrown into the neighborhood garbage pails after Thanksgiving had fed me nicely for several days, but I was chilled as I foraged, and within a week the wind was whistling through the siding of my attic hideout. I had no heat up here. Winter, with its assortment of effects, was a threat to my life style.

I cursed the homeowner I had been for neglecting the upkeep of this place. I rummaged about in all the junk I lived with and, finding some antique curtains in Diana's inherited hope chest, I laid them atop the old coat that I used for a blanket and, pulling down over my ears the watch cap that I had found on the street, I snaked down under these pathetic coverings on my salvaged futon and tried to keep my teeth from chattering.

How could I stay abreast of what was going on in my house if, when the snow came, my every footstep in the yard would leave a trail of incrimination and such clear proof of a prowler on the grounds as to get Diana on the phone to the town police?

I was tempted during one dry cold spell to let myself in the back door of my house and keep warm beside my basement furnace, safely spending a few hours down there between midnight and dawn. But I would not surrender to my former self. Whatever I did I would do as I had done. Which meant also



"There I go—still writing 'B.C.' on my checks."

that going into a shelter for the homeless—there had to be one somewhere in town, probably at the south end, where lived immigrants, undocumented aliens, and the working poor—that, too, was out of the question. And never mind principles: even the homeless have names, histories, and inquisitive social workers. If I played dumb, went mute, how could I not end up committed somewhere? Better to freeze to death. As I understood it, it wasn't half bad—you simply grew warm and fell asleep.

Another option, one not prohibited by any vows I had taken, was to find shelter in Dr. Sondervan's house. While it is true that I did more than once sneak into the basement dorm to use the bathroom, and on occasion I even risked a shower with Herbert and Emily guarding the door, and while another time, late at night, they led me into the dark kitchen, whose antiseptic smell was an offense to my nostrils, and whose ticking clock suggested discipline verging on tyranny, so that it was almost as a courtesy to them that I accepted an apple and a chicken leg, I could not reasonably ex-

pect in this odd doctor's sanitarium to go unnoticed as an overnight guest.

And so, as I pondered and worried and accomplished nothing, the winter blew in with a wild snow that scoured the streets and roared through my meagre shelter like the vengeful God of the Old Testament.

Of course, I was not trapped; I just felt as if I were. I thought what a brilliant evolutionary expedient was hibernation, and if bears and hedgehogs and bats had managed to work it into their repertoire why hadn't we?

Actually, as the snow was blown against the siding of the garage it stuck there, sealing off the cracks, and my atelier became a bit cozier, though not in time to keep me from falling ill. I thought I had caught cold when I awoke with eyes watering and a sore throat. But when I tried to get up I felt too weak to stand. I could actually feel the virus humming happily through me. There comes a moment when you have to admit that you're sick. How could I have expected otherwise, as undernourished and poorly prepared for the winter as I was?

I had never in my life felt so bad. I

must have been running a high fever, because I was out of it half the time. I have an image of two alarmed young retarded standing in the doorway looking down at me. Perhaps I gave them a pathetic wave of my pale, bony hand. And then one of them must have come back that night or another, because I woke up in the small hours with a hot-water bottle under my feet. And—this is the most phantasmic impression of all—once I awakened to find Emily in my bed, clothed, with her arms and legs wrapped around me as if to provide warmth. At the same time, though, she was pressing her pelvis rhythmically against my hip and cooing something and kissing my bearded cheeks.

After several days, I found myself still alive. I got up from my poor pallet and did not collapse. I was a bit weak but steady on my feet and clear-headed. If one can feel physically chastened, as if having been scrubbed down to another skin, that's what I felt. I studied myself in the antique silver hand mirror: what a thin, gaunt fellow I had become, though with eyes bright with intelligence. I decided that I had passed through some crisis that was more a test of spirit than a lousy virus. I felt good. Tall and lean and limber. There was a stale sandwich and a glass of frozen milk beside my bed. The jars that served as my urinals were empty and aligned in a gleaming row. Sun came through the bull's-eye window and cast an oblong rainbowed image of itself on the attic floor.

Wrapping my coat around me, I went outside into the cold pure air of the winter morning, careful not to slip on the icy steps. The bamboo copse was encased in clear ice. I looked for my friends, for some sign of them, but there was not even one track in the snow covering Sondervan's back yard. I saw no smoke from the chimney, no lights at the back basement door that had always burned there, day and night. So they were gone, the whole crew of them, patients, staff. Do you take a houseful of mentally problematic people for a Christmas vacation? Or had the neighbors finally got a court to rule against Sondervan's little sanitarium? And the doctor? Had he fled to his practice in the city? I didn't know.

They had been like little elves tending to my illness, Herbert and Emily, there but not there.

I spent that day getting used to the fact that I was alone again in the fullness of my hermitage. It was not a bad feeling. The childishness of the two of them had migrated somewhat to me, and, while I felt bad for them, their home, such as it was, taken from them, it was a relief to be back in my own mind, undistracted, uninvolved. That night I was once again out on my rounds, and the takings were good. I put together a fine dinner and for drink I melted snow in my mouth.

When the weather softened, leaving only patches of snow on the ground, I resumed my nighttime surveillance of my home. I found some subtle changes. Diana had done something with her hair, cut it shorter. I was not sure it was right for her. There was a jauntiness in her step. The twins appeared to have grown an inch or two since the last time I had looked in the window. Quite the young ladies. No more fighting, no door slams. Mother and daughters seemed very together, even happy. The undecorated fir tree in the dining room told me that Christmas had not yet arrived.

Why did all of this come to me as a presentiment? I was uneasy as I climbed back to my atelier. I found myself thinking of the law. I knew that, having disappeared and not been found after diligent inquiry, I would be declared an absentee and Diana, as my spouse, would become temporary administrator of my property. Had she not seen to that, I was sure that one of my partners would have seen to it for her. What I could not remember was how much time would have to elapse before I was declared legally dead and the provisions of my will would come into play. Was it a year, two years, five years? And why was I thinking about this? "Spouse"? "Diligent inquiry"? Why was I thinking with these words, these legal terms? I had expunged the law from my mind, I had wiped the slate clean, so what was the matter with me?

I did something then out of a gleeful-seeming desperation that I still don't understand. A couple of times a year, an old Italian man who had a knife-and-tool-sharpening business in his van would

come to the back door and ask if anything needed to be sharpened. He had his van outfitted with a gas-powered grinding wheel. Diana would give him kitchen knives, poultry shears, scissors, even if they didn't need sharpening, just because she knew he needed work. I think it was the Old World quality of this gentle peddler that appealed to her. So there I was, looking out the window and watching him come up the driveway and stand at the door while Diana went into the kitchen to find something for him.

A moment later, I was standing behind him with a big grin; I was this tall, long-haired homeless soul with a gray beard down to his chest, who, for all Diana knew, as she returned with a handful of knives, was the old Italian's assistant. I wanted to look into her eyes, I wanted to see if there was any recognition there. I didn't know what I would do if she recognized me; I didn't even know if I wanted her to recognize me. She didn't. The knives were handed over, the door closed, and the old Italian, after frowning at me and muttering something in his own language, went back to his van.

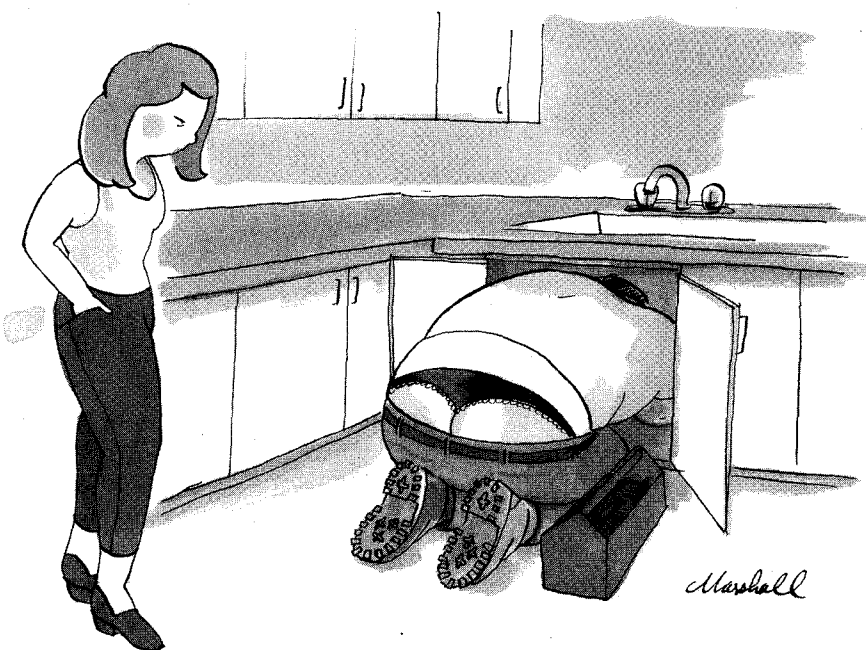
And, back in my atelier, I thought of the green-eyed glance of my wife, the intelligence it took in, the judgment it registered, all in that instant of nonrecognition. While I, her lawful husband, stood there grinning like an idiot. I decided that it was good that she hadn't recognized me—it would have been disastrous if she had. My devilish impulse had pulled off

a good joke. But my disappointment was like one of those knives, after sharpening, in my chest.

A day or two later, in the late afternoon, as the setting sun reddened the sky over the big trees, I heard a car pulling into the driveway. A door slammed, and by the time I got to the attic window whoever it was had disappeared around the front of the house. I had never seen this car before. It was a top-of-the-line sedan, a sleek black Mercedes. Long after the sun had set and all the lights were on in my house, I could see that the car was still there. I kept going back to the window and the car kept being there. Whoever it was, he was staying to dinner. For, of course, I knew it was a he.

The moon was out, and so it was somewhat risky for me to go around to the dining room and look in the window. The shades were drawn—what was she trying to hide?—but not completely; there was an inch or two of light above the windowsill. When I bent my legs and peered in, I could see his back, and the back of his head, and, across the table from him, my smiling radiant wife lifting her wineglass as if in acknowledgment of something he had said. I heard the girls' voices; the whole family was there, having themselves a grand time with this guest, this special guest, whoever he was.

I lurked about through dinner; they took their damn time, all of them, and then there was coffee and dessert, which



Diana liked to serve in the living room. I ran around to that window and again saw his back. He was a well-tailored fellow with a good head of salt-and-pepper hair. He was not particularly tall but sturdy, strong-looking. It was no one I knew, not anyone from my firm, not one of our friends come to hit on Diana. Was it someone she had met? I was determined to keep watch and to satisfy myself that he did not stay past dinner. But surely that was not in the cards, not with the twins in the house. Nevertheless, I lingered at the window, even though the night was cold and getting colder. And then he did leave; they were handing him his coat and I turned and ran around the back of the house and took a position at the corner, where I could see the driveway. I was looking at the front of his car, and when he got in and the cabin of the car lit up, I had a clear view of his face, and it was my former best friend, Dirk Richardson, the man from whom I had stolen Diana, a lifetime ago.

The next days were busy ones. I washed as best I could with melted snow and dried myself with one of Dr. Sondervan's towels, a gift from Herbert and Emily. I took my wallet out of the top drawer of the old broken-down bureau. In it was all the cash I had come home with that night of the raccoon, my credit cards, Social Security card, driver's license. I dug around for my checkbook, house and car keys—all the impedimenta of citizenry. I then contrived to get myself to town, cutting through the Sondervan back yard to the next block and thence to the business district.

My first stop was the Goodwill store, where I replaced my tattered rags with a clean and minimally decent brown suit, uniironed shirt, overcoat, wool socks, and a pair of brogues that were no better fitting than my wingtips but more appropriate to the season. The ladies at the Goodwill were shocked when I walked in, but my courteous demeanor and the clear effort I was making to better myself left them smiling approvingly as I left. And don't forget to get yourself a nice haircut, dear, one of them said.

That was exactly my intention. I walked into a unisex place on the theory

that my shoulder-length hair would not alarm them as it would a traditional old-time barber. Still, there was resistance—Can't come in here without an appointment, the hairdresser-in-chief sniffed—at which point I laid two crisp hundred-dollar bills on the cashier's table and an empty chair materialized. A layered cut and not too short, I said.



I watched in the big mirror as, snip by snip, I travelled back in time. With each falling hank of hair, more and more of the disastrous lineaments of my previous self emerged, until, big naked ears and all, staring back at me was the missing link to Howard Wakefield. Yet a shave was still required for the transmogrification, and this took another fifty dollars, shaves not being in the repertoire of this crew of artistes. Somehow they came up with shears and a straight razor and several of the staff gathered around to agree on a strategy. I didn't want to see. I lay back in the chair and prepared to have my throat cut. I didn't care. I was disappointed in myself and how easily I was acclimating to the old life. It was as if I had never left.

Finally, I was sat up to see the result, and it was me, all right, looking pale and somewhat skinnier, the eyes perhaps too importunate, a new loose fold of flesh under the chin, Howard Wakefield redux, a man of the system.

That was enough for one day.

That night, in my unaccustomed togs, I slipped around to the house to see if anything special was going on. Another visitor, perhaps, a justice of the peace to accompany Dirk Richardson? But all was quiet. No strange cars in the driveway, and my wife at her dressing table, not quite naked in her negligible concession to winter. She had something on the stereo, her favorite composer, Schubert, whom she had touted to me when we were dating. It was one of the Impromptus, played by Dinu Lipatti, and it brought back the old days, before such music was no longer ours. I felt as if an artery had been opened, and ran back to my attic.

The next morning, the garage doors opened beneath me and I watched as Diana, with the girls in tow, backed the S.U.V. down the driveway. Of course.

Christmas shopping. They would head for the mall. They would lunch there as well. I waited a few minutes, took out my car keys, went downstairs, and turned on the engine of my BMW. It started right up.

I had heard about Dirk over the years that he had made himself a fortune. And why not, as he was a hedge-fund manager who was quoted on the business pages.

Remarkable how I still knew how to drive, and how I remembered all the shortcuts to the highway to New York. An hour later, the city rose up before my eyes, and in a moment, it seemed, I was in it, in all the noisy raucous chaos of souls flowing through the city's canyons, each of them with an imperial intention. They were underground, too, rumbling along in the subways. They were stacked above my head, too, forty, fifty stories of them. It was stunning. I was in shock and barely able to negotiate the entrance to a garage.

Had I actually worked in this city most of my adult life? Would I have to again?

My Madison Avenue haberdashery was still where it had always been and my man was there standing in the suit department as if he'd been waiting for me. I had had myself barbered and had clothed myself in a reasonably presentable outfit at the Goodwill before coming here, just so that I could get through the door. He looked at me and shook his head. He beckoned. Come with me, he said.

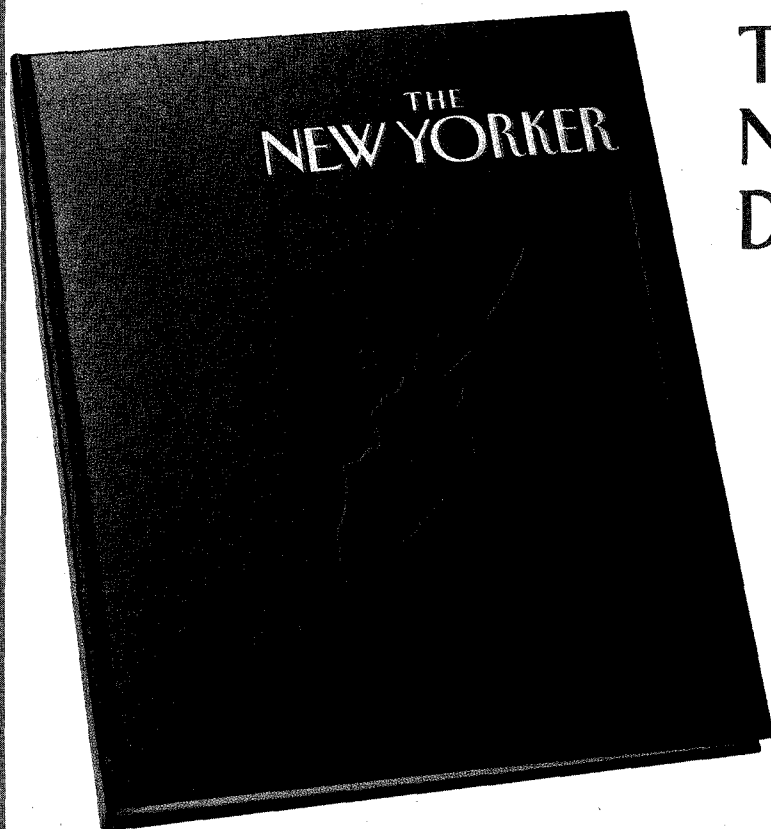
And that is how that evening, after parking the BMW in front of the next house, and taking the trouble to reclaim my litigation bag from the attic, I stood at my front door in my black cashmere coat and pin-striped suit with a Turnbull & Asser spread-collar shirt and a sober Armani silk tie, American-flag suspenders, and Cole Haan black English calfskin shoes, and I turned the key in the lock.

Every light in the house was on. I could hear them in the dining room; they were decorating the Christmas tree.

Hello? I shouted. I'm home! ♦

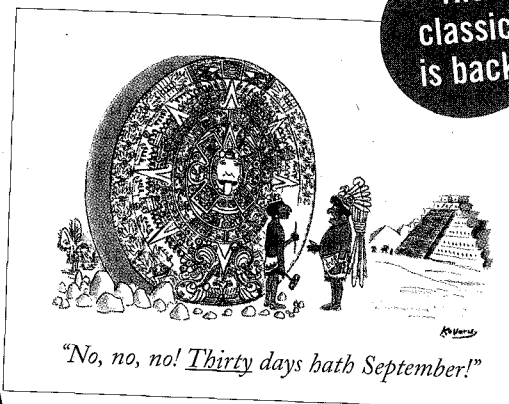
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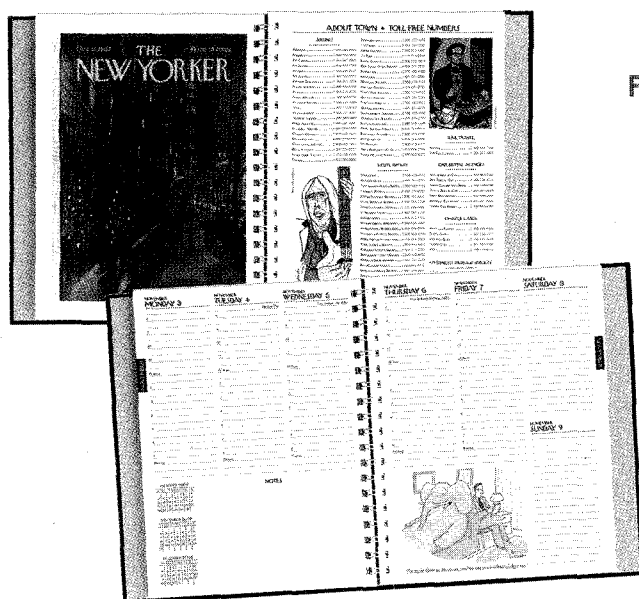
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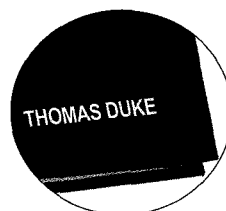
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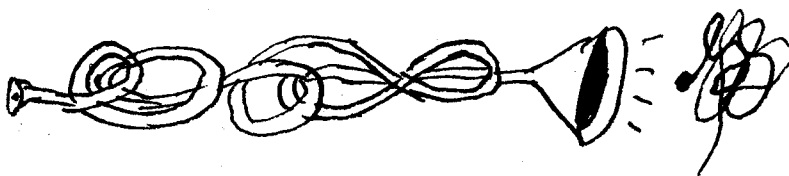
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THE CRITICS



A CRITIC AT LARGE

BALANCE OF TERROR

How Otto Preminger made his movies.

BY DAVID DENBY

Otto Preminger's "Anatomy of a Murder," from 1959, is still the best courtroom drama ever made in this country, and, in its occasional forays out of the court, among the finest evocations of place—an Upper Peninsula Michigan resort area in the off-season, leafless, underpopulated, alcoholic, and forlorn. James Stewart, in one of his wonderful melancholy "late" performances, plays a former county prosecutor named Biegler, a lifelong bachelor who now spends his time with a non-practicing lawyer (Arthur O'Connell) and an unpaid secretary (Eve Arden), who sticks around for the wisecracks. The movie is leisurely, detailed, realistic, intensely companionable; you get a sense of how people exist at the margins of a profession without losing their dignity. It's my favorite Preminger movie, edging out the celebrated "Laura" (1944), a suave murder mystery set in a studio-built Manhattan. "Laura" is sly and haunting—a Park Avenue ghost movie that anticipates the dark-shadowed noir style that blossomed in Preminger's work later in the forties. The light in "Anatomy," on the other hand, is not shadowy but gray and even: in that world, good and evil are not easily identifiable. And the music, in contrast to David Raksin's lush popular romanticism for "Laura," is pure mockery—a tickling jazz score by Duke Ellington that suggests something unruy going on beneath the surface.

As it turns out, "Anatomy of a Mur-

der" is stunningly ambiguous. Rousing himself from his lethargy, Biegler defends an Army lieutenant (Ben Gazzara) who has killed a local man—a hotel owner and saloonkeeper—after the guy has mauled and raped the lieutenant's wife (Lee Remick). Or at least that's what the wife says; the medical evidence is inconclusive, and the bruises she has on her body may have come from her husband knocking her around. As played by the young Lee Remick, the wife is almost haplessly flirtatious. She flirts even with the disconcerted Biegler, who disapproves of her but also feels a certain chagrin: she's young, she's sexual, and, looking at her, he feels that he missed the party. What's going on with this surly Army lieutenant and his enticing but anxious wife? Are they playing their lawyer for a sucker? We wait for the trial to make things clear.

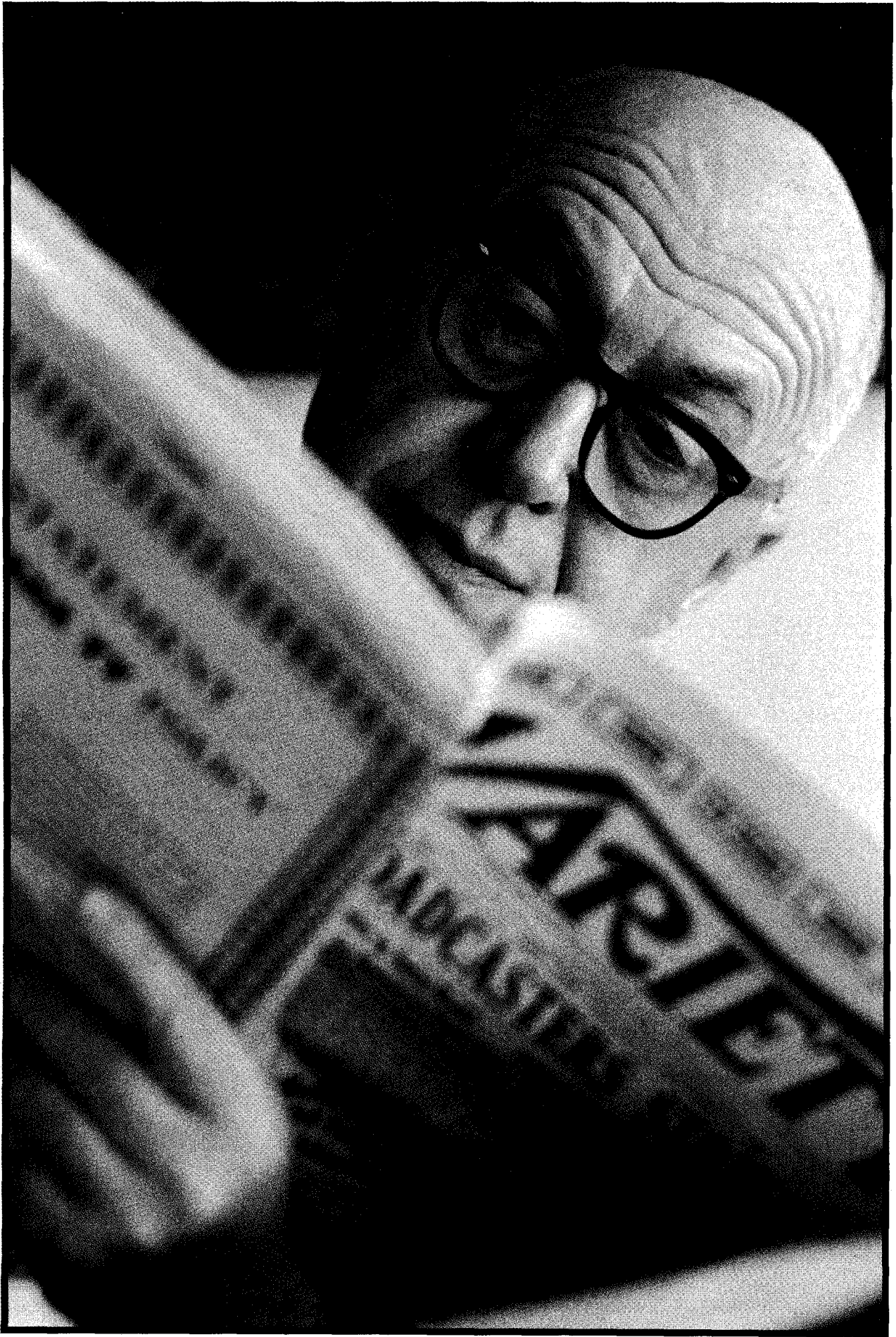
"Anatomy of a Murder" is Preminger at his finest—intelligent, intricate, utterly unillusioned, and even-handed. Preminger was fair-minded about many things, and particularly so in the late fifties and early sixties, when, in a rather odd career move, he came to specialize in enormous fictions about the interior workings of major public institutions. He re-created the legal proceedings in "Anatomy" with something like love; he afforded the same meticulous attention to the British quandary in Palestine and the Jewish nationalist cause in "Exodus"

(1960), the deliberations of the United States Senate in "Advise and Consent" (1962), the power plays within the Curia in "The Cardinal" (1963), and the demotions and promotions of Navy officers in "In Harm's Way" (1965). In all, Preminger is a strange case. At his peak, for more than twenty years he created sophisticated entertainments in many different styles for an audience that was composed largely of grown-ups. But was he a great director or just an inquisitive and urbane fellow who respected the audience's intelligence? (A retrospective of Preminger's work running at Film Forum through January 17th may serve to straighten some of this out.)

Preminger rarely spoke like a man driven to bring formal or expressive pleasure to moviegoers or even to himself. He spoke of daring subjects, of *projects*. By the early fifties, he was working independently, producing as well as directing his own pictures—two functions that he saw as continuous. Before shooting, he shaped the script with his writers, and, on the set, he practiced a ruthless economy, finishing his pictures on time and on budget. He then delivered much of the publicity himself. Preminger was a master of high-minded ballyhoo—the taboo-breaking story, the battle with obtuse censors, the overflowing press banquet, the chartered plane to Cannes for a screening (those were the days). Tall, bald, fearless, and charming in a slightly menacing way, he spoke a German-accented English that was a delight to hear and to make fun of. By the late fifties, he was a director second only to Hitchcock as a Hollywood public figure. At the same time, rumors circulated about his spectacular rudeness and his bullying treatment of actors, especially less experienced actors. This highly intelligent man was capable of grabbing a young performer by the shoulders and screaming "Relax! Relax!" into his face. "Sort of a Jewish Nazi," Joan Crawford called him, and she was a fan.

The first notable claim for Preminger as an artist was advanced in 1954 by Jacques Rivette, then a critic and later one of the New Wave directors. Yet Rivette's article, appearing in *Ca-*

Preminger's on-set tyranny was in the service of liberalism, tolerance, and the free exchange of ideas. Photograph by Burt Glinn.





Top: scenes from
"Anatomy of a
Murder" (Joseph N.
Welch, James
Stewart, et al.;
Lee Remick and
George C. Scott).
Bottom: Joan
Crawford and
Dana Andrews in
"Daisy Kenyon."



hiers du Cinéma during the seedbed years of auteur theory, is a strange affair. Such directors as Howard Hawks, Alfred Hitchcock, and Fritz Lang, Rivette says, "first believe in their themes and then build the strength of their art upon this conviction. Preminger believes first in mise en scène, the creation of a precise complex of sets and characters, a network of relationships, an architecture of connections, an animated complex that seems suspended in space." In other words, he had no overriding thematic obsessions or visual poetry or dramatic motifs—the usual hallmarks of a director given the auteur honorific. It was the physical realization of the movie in space that mattered to him—the manipulation of characters as the camera met, joined, and accompanied actors down streets, along walls, up and down staircases, through passageways. These particular qualities, and Rivette's limited way of praising Preminger, might have deterred exegesis. On the contrary, they spurred it. Preminger the craftsman of genius was a puzzle that needed to be solved, and he was taken up in the sixties by English and American auteur critics. Film magazines devoted special issues to him. Stylistic consistencies were discovered, and

claims were made; "Advise and Consent," a shrewd, scrupulous, but very prosy movie, was hailed as a masterpiece. All of this led to Preminger's being attacked, even contemptuously dismissed, by anti-auteurists like Pauline Kael and Dwight Macdonald. "Otto Preminger is a great showman who has never bothered to learn anything about making a movie," Macdonald wrote in 1964.

Preminger the man without aesthetic passions had become a cause of passion in others, an irony that he no doubt enjoyed. But, twenty-one years after his death, the irony seems a little stale, and the question of his importance remains irritatingly difficult to settle. In a forthcoming critical biography, "The World and Its Double: The Life and Work of Otto Preminger" (Farrar, Straus & Giroux; \$30), Chris Fujiwara picks up where the sixties auteurists left off, finding patterns of narrative strategy, physical detail, and characterization. But, in the course of much formal analysis, Fujiwara seems to be straining to stack up similarities, and, reading him, one is reminded of the old complaint against auteurism—that the mere finding of patterns doesn't guarantee that the movies are any good. In an-

other new book, "Otto Preminger: The Man Who Would Be King" (Knopf; \$35), Foster Hirsch, a professor of film at Brooklyn College, takes a more commonsense approach. Hirsch, who has a warmer sense of a movie's human and dramatic meanings (and failings) than Fujiwara, sorts out the good films from the bad and is eager to present a fully developed portrait of a man often reviled as a brute. Yet while Hirsch wants to praise Preminger as an artist, what impresses him most is the vaunting authority of Preminger as a personality. The book inadvertently raises a curious question: Can technical skill and craft, combined with worldliness and urbanity, and presented in a distinct style, rise to the level of art?

Otto Preminger always passed himself off as Viennese, but he was born (in 1905) in Wiznitz, Poland, an obscure corner of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. The Premingers were *Ostjuden*—East European Jews—and therefore suffered from the status chagrins of provincials as well as from the usual Austrian anti-Semitism. A formidable appearance and manner became central to the family's sense of itself; in an early portrait, Otto's father, Markus,

a distinguished lawyer, appears with waxed mustaches pointing upward like raised swords. The family moved to Vienna when Preminger was ten, and Markus Preminger quickly became the chief state prosecutor. A privileged and much indulged youth, Otto read the drama classics and attended the theatre. At the age of seventeen, he presented himself as an apprentice actor to Max Reinhardt, the founder of the Salzburg Festival and the most celebrated theatrical producer and director in Vienna. Preminger never amounted to much as an actor (early baldness ended any thought of a career as a leading man); he was always more the impresario-in-the-making. He left Reinhardt after only a year, acted and directed elsewhere, and, while attending university, helped start two new theatre companies. By the age of twenty-five, he was a seasoned theatrical professional who had also (to appease his father) earned a law degree from the University of Vienna. A few years later, he inherited Reinhardt's position as manager of the prestigious Theater in der Josefstadt. There Preminger let other directors do the classics while he staged the farces—which seems odd, since his movies, though often witty in a sardonic way, never demonstrate much feeling for physical comedy.

Having received offers from both Broadway and Hollywood, Preminger left Vienna in October, 1935, a time when a Jew could still depart from, rather than escape, the city. Hirsch records that Preminger sailed on the Normandie, hobnobbed with swells and aristos, and then checked into the St. Regis in New York. Though still in his twenties, Preminger radiated success and authority, and many Americans were eager to be impressed; in those years, appreciation of a cultivated European somehow raised their own status. Others may have merely been vanquished by Preminger's implacable desire to receive the best treatment, even when he couldn't pay the bill. On his first day in New York, he was taken to lunch at "21" and was conducted by the co-owner, Jack Kriendler, on a personal tour of the restaurant, which, along with the St. Regis, remained his favorite haunt in New York for years afterward. Throughout his life, he was a connois-

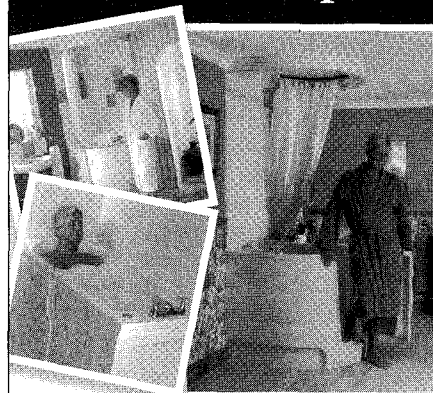
seur of hotels, restaurants, mistresses, art works, furnishings—the luxurious paraphernalia of the big time.

Yet his artistic success in the early years was mixed. After directing a single play in New York, he wound up working at Twentieth Century-Fox for Darryl Zanuck, a vibrantly self-assured and often shrewd lowbrow from Nebraska. Zanuck put him to work as an apprentice, then gave him some B movies to direct. By 1937, Preminger, having proved himself capable, was assigned to direct a big-budget adaptation of Robert Louis Stevenson's "Kidnapped." Zanuck thought the early rushes looked stiff. He and Preminger began to argue in Zanuck's office; Preminger, neck veins bulging, blew up, and Zanuck quickly froze him out at Fox. This appears to have been the first notable instance of what became famous as the Preminger tantrum—an emurpled complexion followed by a seeming loss of control and shrieking insults.

Preminger returned to the more comforting milieu of New York theatre and café society, where he remained for five years, directing plays, until, in 1942, Zanuck left Fox to oversee production of training films for the Army Signal Corps. Preminger jumped back to the studio and was working with three writers on an adaptation of Vera Caspary's suspense novel "Laura" when, in 1943, Zanuck abruptly returned, took the reins again, and immediately assigned "Laura" to the distinguished film and theatre director Rouben Mamoulian; Preminger was allowed only to produce. After three weeks of shooting, however, Mamoulian's work displeased everyone—the style was melodramatic, the actors were florid, and Zanuck, taking it out on Preminger, wired him that "you should have stayed in New York or Vienna, where you belong." Despite this sally, Zanuck listened to Preminger when he argued for a cooler, drier style, and, in the end, Zanuck dropped Mamoulian and gave complete control of the movie to Preminger, who began all over again with the actors and technicians and created "Laura" as we know it.

From his years in New York, Preminger had developed an acid sense of the city's upper classes. "Mamoulian is a

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nice man, isn't he?" he said to Vincent Price, who plays a svelte, predatory gigolo. "I'm not, and most of my friends are these kind of people"—by which he meant not only Price's character but Judith Anderson's vampiric socialite and Clifton Webb's primly snotty columnist, a middlebrow with a boutonniere who manufactures maudlin sentiment for the masses. "Laura" has been subjected to endless formal analysis, but the movie's fascination has always relied on the outrageous bitchiness of the dialogue and the almost comical coldness of its approach to murder. Laura (Gene Tierney), the beauty who is the object of everyone's obsession, has apparently been killed, but then turns out not to be dead—the girl found in Laura's apartment was

a model whose face was destroyed by a shotgun blast. No one, including Laura, mourns the actual victim. As the truth is revealed, all the characters calibrate their next move in the game of power, money, and sex. Even the hero—Dana Andrews's police detective, a tough guy in an effete milieu—comes off as both neurotic and calculating. Preminger's candor about what he brought to the material, and the coolness that allowed him to see what people are really up to, is what keeps "Laura" alive and biting after all these years.

"Laura" was nominated for five Oscars, and Preminger won Zanuck's respect. As a Fox contract director, he had to take assignments that didn't much interest him, but, when you look at his work from the forties and the early fifties, you find, amid many other films, a series of noir dramas that are among the best movies of the period. So many pictures now are bloated with unnecessary spectacle and backstory that the economy and decisiveness of the noirs—violent, saturnine, dark-city crime narratives driven by strongly motivated characters—seems more miraculous than ever. Like many noir heroes, Preminger's are tormented, sleepless men pursuing women, money, and respect. The underrated Dana Andrews, anguish festering under a self-assured surface, worked for Preminger in four other movies, notably "Fallen Angel" (1945), in which he played a failed public-rela-

tions man and con artist who becomes obsessed with a sullen beauty (Linda Darnell) working in a Pacific Coast coffee shop; and "Where the Sidewalk Ends" (1950), in which he's a troubled New York police detective with a propensity for violence. Yet if the characters are violent and half crazy, Preminger holds back from obsession. The virtuoso moving camera—always miraculously

easy and fluent—doesn't take the point of view of one character or another. Nor does Preminger rely on frequent closeups, which often define characters in isolation as morally pure or damned—the common technique of melodrama. As Andrew Sarris and many other critics have pointed out, he prefers the two-shot, with the actors fac-

ing each other, or positioned side by side or one behind the other, an arrangement that forces us to balance conflicting arguments or emotions. Almost everyone in Preminger's noir movies has jumbled motives, or mixed qualities of good and evil, and his refusal to sort out and judge makes these films, for all their period rhetoric of shadow and lust, feel modern and open-ended. Preminger was a dramatist, not a melodramatist, and, as his later career suggested, a dramatist of a particularly dialectical sort; he was an autocrat who believed that differing points of view needed to be honored, or at least listened to.

An overbearing nature, flourished like a sword, was standard equipment among the German and Austrian directors who had come to Hollywood in the teens and twenties. Before Preminger, there was Josef von Sternberg, wearing boots and carrying a riding crop on the set; Erich von Stroheim, reportedly demanding monogrammed underwear for the Imperial Army extras in "The Wedding March"; F. W. Murnau, after his initial success here, loudly proclaiming his sufferings as an artist in philistine America, and so on. In Central Europe, manners could be authoritarian in ways unknown in America, but, still, some of the carrying-on was sheer imposture. Von Sternberg and von Stroheim were born middle-class Austrian Jews, so the "von" and some of the hauteur were



concocted for the occasion—in a new country, these men wanted to be impressive. Was Preminger also acting a part? On several occasions, both onstage and in the movies, he played a Nazi, most famously in Billy Wilder's "Stalag 17," from 1953, in which he was the bullying camp commandant. As a director, he seems to have been eager for people to think of him as nasty: fear of his brutal candor kept actors and technicians in line, discouraging most of them from arguing with him or trying out ideas of their own.

The targets of his outbursts were, for the most part, highly selective; his rage at Zanuck was an anomaly. He did not blow up at Frank Sinatra, Laurence Olivier, John Wayne, Deborah Kerr, or the other big stars who appeared in his movies. He reserved his wrath, instead, for the largely untested Tom Tryon, the leading man in "The Cardinal," or for Jean Seberg, the seventeen-year-old high-school graduate he plucked out of small-town Iowa and made into a leading lady in "St. Joan" (1957) and "Bonjour Tristesse" (1958). Tryon, Seberg, and many others were reduced to tears by his hectoring and became so rattled they couldn't remember their lines; that night, he would take them out to the best restaurant in town, only to humiliate them again the next morning. With one exception, he was always the one dealing out pleasure and pain. On the set of another terrific noir movie, "Angel Face" (1952), he demanded so many takes of a scene that required Robert Mitchum to slap Jean Simmons across the face that Mitchum finally turned around and slapped Preminger.

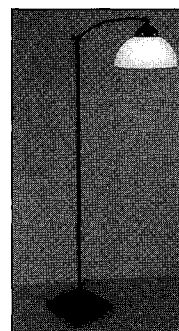
Did his way with actors work? As both Hirsch and Fujiwara insist, the old pros who knew their lines got along with him easily and performed well (and, for the record, the red-faced Simmons is quite good). Even Joan Crawford, often so stiff and humorless, gave a spontaneous and likable performance as a professional woman unable to choose between lovers (Andrews, again, and Henry Fonda) in "Daisy Kenyon" (1947), Preminger's sole, and very engaging, venture into the modern-woman's-picture genre. But Preminger lacked the patience to coax a good performance out of unformed actors—or actors formed by Method training, which required them

to connect the emotions of a scene to past personal experience. He cared only for what an actor could do on the spot. Still, his inability to teach could lead to sterling results. To my ears, Jean Seberg's performances for him are excruciating, yet her callow, just-off-the-farm quality was exactly what Godard wanted for the conscienceless American girl in "Breathless" (1959). Inadvertently, Preminger delivered her intact to a modernist master.

Preminger's annoyance with Jean Simmons may have been exacerbated by the way "Angel Face" was made—as a favor to Zanuck, who, in turn, wanted to do a favor for his pal Howard Hughes, who had Simmons under contract. This sort of seigniorial trading of talent—the last remnant of a fading studio system, with its exclusive contracts—infuriated Preminger, and in 1954, anticipating a trend toward independence by a number of years, he bought out his own contract with Fox. A free man, he arranged for the financing and distribution of most of his films himself, and he dealt with controversial subjects that challenged the traditional Hollywood squeamishness. We have long taken for granted the liberties he fought for all through the fifties, so the issues may now seem musty, even absurd: for instance, the right to make light-hearted jokes about virginity and seduction, in the harmless comedy "The Moon Is Blue" (1953); the right to portray heroin addiction with a decent amount of candor, in "The Man with the Golden Arm" (1955), a film now remarkable mainly for Frank Sinatra's touching performance as an addict. But such issues were not absurd at the time. The two films were refused a seal of approval by the industry-backed Production Code, but Preminger, forging ahead, opened them without the seal, hastening both the death of the Code and the liberation of movie content.

Preminger's independent productions in the fifties and early sixties often featured jazz scores, along with chic title design by Saul Bass, who animated solid blocks of color—the titles were aggressively informal and cool, almost hip. Preminger had become a kind of high-bourgeois modernist, relinquishing a Bel Air mansion for an austere, white-walled East Side town house furnished with Eames chairs, curved marble tables, and

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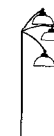


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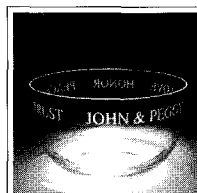


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art by Picasso, Chagall, and Dufy. Liberal in his social attitudes, he enjoyed shocking a country that was both easy to shock and quick to recover from shock, rewarding a creator who stayed just ahead of the curve. He hired the blacklisted screenwriters Ring Lardner, Jr., Albert Maltz, and Dalton Trumbo; he made two musicals with all-black casts, "Carmen Jones" (1954), an adaptation of Bizet's opera set in the contemporary Deep South and featuring a stunning Dorothy Dandridge, who was Preminger's girlfriend at the time, and "Porgy and Bess" (1959), a noble but surprisingly stiff-jointed version of the Gershwin opera. He had become an enlightened citizen, a flamboyant show-business equivalent of, say, Eleanor Roosevelt or Joseph N. Welch, the anti-McCarthy lawyer, who, in a shrewd bit of casting by Preminger, played the judge in "Anatomy of a Murder." No one has been able to separate the opportunist from the man of principle in Preminger, and perhaps there's no need to—the two sides of him combined to set his work apart from the doughy liberal films of the period directed by Stanley Kramer and Martin Ritt.

In a familiar typology, the sociologist Max Weber distinguished among three kinds of leaders—the charismatic, the traditional, and the rational-legal embodiment of authority produced by the modern bureaucratic state. In the United States, there wasn't much tradition to draw on, or, at least, none that mattered to Preminger, but he partook of the two other kinds in paradoxical combination—he became an instance of overwhelming personal charisma operating in a society that prized rationality and legality. What Preminger admired about America was the openness of its culture; he disdained ideologues and took seriously the notion of civil discourse and the exchange of opinion. Here was a man who forbade disagreement on the set and humiliated dozens of people, yet he put tyranny in the service of its opposite: his "institutional" films are all about argument, debate, mutual respect, and compromise. In "Exodus," a half-naked Paul Newman, emerging like a Jewish Triton from the Mediterranean, excited teen-age girls from Scarsdale to Shaker Heights, but a significant part of the film is given over to detailed wrangling between Newman's relatively

moderate Haganah and the more radical Irgun. Preminger had refashioned the epic as disputation; celebrating the birth of Israel, he also gave the British and the Arabs their due. "Advise and Consent" is an enormously articulate structure of warring points of view, in which the most appealing character is the Senate Majority Leader (played by Walter Pidgeon), who is willing to make all sorts of deals to push the President's nomination for Secretary of State through the Senate; the least appealing character is a liberal demagogue who uses blackmail as a tactic. In "The Cardinal," which chronicles the rise of an American priest named Stephen Fermoye, Preminger obviously loves the spectacle of vulpine cardinals jostling one another amid the Vatican's frescoes, stairways, and antechambers. Out of piety, Fermoye betrays several women, but Preminger dramatizes the personal issues with such rigorous dialectical balance that one has trouble telling if the man is supposed to be a victim of Church law or just an insensitive fool.

Preminger was perhaps too refined and modulated in his sophistication to achieve more than occasional greatness as a director. He doesn't compare, for instance, with his fellow-émigrés Fritz Lang and Billy Wilder. It's hard to think of a heartbreaking or truly exhilarating moment in his work. Yet, at his best, he raised civil discourse to the level of subtle entertainment: one can get caught up in the intricately choreographed give-and-take of "Advise and Consent" without caring whether the nominee gets confirmed or not. And, in at least one case, he was enough of an artist to know that discourse could not be enough. In "Anatomy of a Murder," the conclusion of the trial settles nothing—the verdict is announced, but we still don't know if the wife was violated. The moral chaos of the Army lieutenant and his wife overwhelms the hyperrationality of the legal process, and truth recedes into mazelike corridors of doubt. The movie ends with Ellington's pointed ironies—a muted trumpet shrieking and then gasping in mock anguish. And the light remains gray. ♦

NEWYORKER.COM

David Denby talks about Otto Preminger and about his favorite films of 2007.

BRIEFLY NOTED

Foreigners, by Caryl Phillips (Knopf; \$24.95). This uneven but compelling book, which is structured as a triptych and interweaves fiction and history, spans centuries and characters but remains in one place: a starkly racist England. In the first section, Francis Barber, the Jamaican slave who became Samuel Johnson's servant, suffers ostracism and impoverishment after his employer's death; the second follows the rise and tragic decline of Randy Turpin, Britain's first black world-champion boxer; and the third is a fractured homage to David Oluwale, the Nigerian immigrant whose mistreatment by the Leeds police, in 1969, briefly enraged the public. The book's scope is ambitious, and Phillips's command of the vernacular impressive, but the strictly historical sections sometimes read like dry recitation. The narrative recipe works best in the final part, where it becomes clear that Oluwale, despite his aspirations, was doomed from the moment he arrived in England.

Remembering the Bones, by Frances Itani (Atlantic Monthly; \$24). On the way to a party for Queen Elizabeth II, Georgie Witley, an Anglophile Canadian born the same day, crashes and is thrown from the driver's seat of her car. Lying on her back, like a beetle, at the bottom of a ravine, Georgie dutifully recites a passage from her grandfather's volume of "Gray's Anatomy": "Femur, tibia, fibula. Radius, ulna." The litany of bones anchors Georgie in her broken body, and also helps her to coax eight decades of memories from their hiding places. She reflects on a life given shape by marriage, motherhood, and world war, milestones that she and the Queen have in common. In unpretentious, quietly penetrating prose, Itani exposes the richness and depth beneath the surface of one ordinary life.

Staring Back, by Chris Marker (Wexner Center for the Arts/M.I.T.; \$29.95). A French auteur so elusive he makes Godard seem like a publicity hound, the eighty-six-year-old Marker creates dazzling films that combine documentary footage and fictional narrative to sur-

vey history, politics, current events, and his own peripatetic life. The authentic quality of witness that attends Marker's reflections and pronouncements in his cinematic work is evident in the two hundred photographs in this collection, taken between 1952 and 2006. The images are both global and intimate, capturing political demonstrations at home and abroad, along with the faces of friends and strangers encountered in the course of making movies in Paris, Havana, Guinea Bissau, and Tokyo. Accompanied by text in Marker's inimitable voice, the collection stands as further testimony to his commitment to record not just social struggle but the poetry behind it.

Descents of Memory, by Morine Krissdóttir (Overlook Duckworth; \$40). The first comprehensive biography of John Cowper Powys, the author of "Wolf Solent" and "Porius," reveals a man who saw himself as a magician and manipulator, to the occasional consternation of the family members and lovers who found themselves depicted in his writing. Born in Derbyshire in 1872, Powys was plagued by ulcers and possessed of a disastrous business sense, had various sexual preoccupations (he found the slender legs of young boys titillating), and tended to mythologize his own existence, ritually tapping his head on stones in attempts to communicate with Indian spirits. He was also incredibly prolific, drawing on his suffering and his obsessions to produce sprawling novels. Krissdóttir's sympathetic immersion in the Powysian universe is balanced by a sharp critical engagement with Powys's work, and she uses recently discovered correspondence and diaries to provide a fuller portrait of his relationship with Phyllis Playter, his longtime companion and amanuensis.



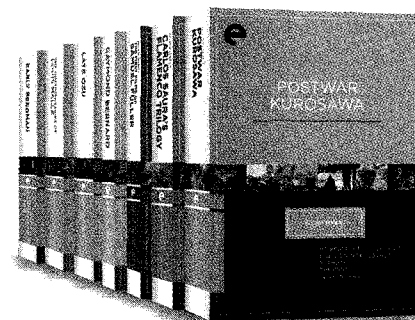
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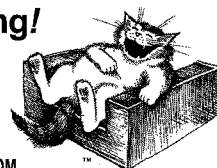
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FULL EXPOSURE

Making it on MySpace.

BY SASHA FRERE-JONES

In early 2006, Kate Nash, an eighteen-year-old London resident, fell down a flight of stairs at her home and broke her foot. Earlier that day, she had learned that she had not been admitted to the Bristol Old Vic Theatre School, a prestigious drama academy. As consolation, her parents bought her an electric guitar and an amplifier. Nash began writing songs and recording them on her computer, using the GarageBand software program. Within a few weeks, she had posted several songs on her MySpace page. The British singer Lily Allen discovered Nash's music, and featured Nash's page in her MySpace "Top 8." Soon, Nash had signed with Fiction Records, a subsidiary of Polydor.

At least, so the story goes. A similar tale of Web-to-chart success circulated about Allen when her debut album was released, in 2005. The truth, however, is slightly different. Allen's MySpace page has been consistently popular (it has racked up more than ten million page views), but the songwriter sent a demo, as aspiring musicians have for decades, to EMI and was signed before her MySpace page even existed. About Nash, what we can say for certain is that her bumptious second single, "Foundations," entered the British charts last June at No. 2, pushing forward the British release of her first album, "Made of Bricks," by a month. The album debuted at No. 1 in August, and is being released this week in the United States.

In the wake of Nash's album, several articles about the "MySpace generation" of young British female singer-songwriters have appeared in the national press. Among the musicians frequently mentioned are Nash, Allen, the unbearable neo-soul singer Adele, the appealing rock songwriter Remi Nicole, and Amy Macdonald, a graduate of the Bono School of Unbridled Earnestness. Like most trend pieces, these articles identify a genuine surge—in this case, an uptick in the num-

ber of young talented women making music in Britain—but overstate its meaning. Whether or not these women were discovered on MySpace doesn't change how their music is reaching the world: their recordings are released on major labels, and they are conducting the usual rounds of music- and beauty-magazine interviews. However, compared with the

they've played a live show, mastered the art of songwriting, or found their voice. The promotion of young talent has always been a central activity of the music business, but now, on Web portals like MySpace, which encourage the complete documentation of one's life in constantly updated photographs, video clips, and blog posts, amateurs are growing up in public. (In a blog post last year, Allen wrote that she felt "fat, ugly and shitter than Winehouse" and was "researching gastric bypass surgery.") If such exposure doesn't kill these young women, it could produce a very hardy breed of pop star.

On the strength of "Foundations," at least, Nash merits a shot at stardom. The song begins with rudimentary stuff: three simple piano chords played over a syn-



Kate Nash's album "Made of Bricks" entered the British charts at No. 1 last summer.

great female musicians who made their mark in the nineteen-nineties—PJ Harvey, Tori Amos, Liz Phair, Courtney Love—these women are less political, less aggressive, and, so far, less inspired. Perhaps MySpace is partly to blame. Internet exposure seems to have become an acceptable substitute for experience, and many artists are getting signed before

thetic drumbeat. A guitar enters, and then Nash's unexpectedly nervous but pleasantly glassy voice: "Thursday night, everything's fine, except you've got that look in your eye when I'm telling a story and you find it boring. You're thinking of something to say." The situation gets worse as the song gets bigger and better. The dumb boyfriend throws up on her trainers (that's

British for sneakers), makes fun of her in front of her friends, and generally behaves like a twenty-something male. Nash alternately whines, begs, and makes a wobbling sound that suggests an imminent rush of tears. It's fun to hear her tell him off—"Yeah, intelligent input darling, why don't you just have another beer, then?"—but the putdowns are there just to get your attention. The chorus is what makes the song work. The chords open up, Nash's voice expands from a yowl into a solid, open-throated sound, and the words take the song beyond the weeklong problems of the young to encompass the lifelong miseries of anyone who hangs on to a relationship long after it should have ended: "My fingertips are holding on to the cracks in our foundation, and I know that I should let go but I can't."

When the verse returns, Nash embellishes full piano chords with her right hand and, with her left, hits rollicking bass notes. The "Chopsticks" opening turns out to have been a sly trick; she can really play, and sing, too: her voice rises in a convincing blend of anger, sadness, and frustration that eventually buckles, and ends as a resigned mumble. Nash was brought up in the posh London neighborhood of Harrow, and the English have taken note of her slightly incongruous accent—lower middle class, broadly speaking, with missing "r"s and "h"s. (There has been discussion in British newspapers of "Mockney," an epithet used to describe singers who allegedly pitch their accents down a few class levels to seem tougher or more authentic.)

Nash spends much of "Made of Bricks" complaining, and eventually one begins to feel sorry not for Nash's anonymous boyfriends (who probably don't deserve better) but for her listeners. A man may well deserve to be called a dickhead, but repeating "Why you being a dickhead for? Stop being a dickhead" is more tedious than insulting. Nash's first single, the infinitely annoying electro rap "Caroline's a Victim," suggests that whatever it is Nash loves has little to do with the "killer beat" she sings about in the song. (Be glad the track isn't on the album.) "Mariella," which is on the album, is a grating song about a troubled girl who has apparently glued her lips together. ("Mariella didn't have many friends, yeah. The girls, they all looked at her and they thought she was quite strange.") And the skeleton in

"Skeleton Song" is—juvenilia alert—an actual skeleton that Nash has befriended. If you can listen to either track more than once, you have an unusually high tolerance for jumpy, repetitive piano playing and cloying language ("Skeleton, you are, you are my friend, and I will be there for you until the end") that might have earned Nash an A in third grade. Listening to her album, I felt at times that I could actually hear the sound of a parental hand patting her on the head.

These gaffes could have been avoided had Nash been allowed a little more time to develop. The three good songs on "Made of Bricks" are very good. "Mouthwash," the best of them, follows the musical arc of "Foundations"; it begins with a crackling solo piano figure, expands into the sound of a full band, and barrels into a chorus in which Nash abandons her habitual sprechstimme for clearly melodic singing. At first, the lyrics seem flirtatious: "This is my face, covered in freckles, with the occasional spot and some veins. This is my body, covered in skin, and not all of it you can see." But Nash isn't chatting up a boy; she's confronting herself. The chorus makes the same shift from specific to general as "Foundations" did, using mundane details to transform Nash into an Everywoman, facing down a long stretch of nothing special: "And I use mouthwash, sometimes I floss. I've got a family and I drink cups of tea. . . . I've got mixed-up memories, and I've got favorite places, and I'm singing oh, oh, on a Friday night, and I hope everything's gonna be all right."

At her second American show, in September, at Joe's Pub, Nash projected a combination of nervousness and aplomb. A pale, button-faced redhead who wears what the British press calls "granny dresses"—think of "Little House on the Prairie"—she slumped at her piano, except when, at rare moments, she remembered that she shouldn't and sat up straight. She tore through her set with alarming force and speed. She enunciated precisely and didn't miss a note, no matter how hard or fast she hit the keys. (Watching her perform, a friend leaned over and whispered, "This girl does not do drugs. Her brain sounds so pink.") Given time, Nash will probably start distinguishing between anger and peevishness, and figure out which of her terrible boyfriends deserves a song. Going easy on the Web probably wouldn't hurt. ♦

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GONE MISSING

"The Orphanage."

BY ANTHONY LANE

The New Year begins in fear and trembling. That, at least, will be the salutary experience of anyone who sees "The Orphanage," the first film from the young Spanish director Juan Antonio Bayona. He devotes himself to his small, shuddering tale with that blend of gusto and particularity—the near-pedantic wish to make the details lock and hold—which by tradition marks out the debutant. Indeed, "The Orphanage" is unblushingly traditional, one rule of horror movies being that there is nothing new under the moon. Rather than clutching at originality, Bayona, like any wise practitioner of the genre, seems happy to raise the dead—to bring fresh life to old tropes and buried images. If he chooses to film his main location, the orphanage of the title, from somewhere around rose-bush level, craning upward to catch it at a looming angle, and so to conjure memories of the Bates house in "Psycho," well, good for him.

The orphanage, which lies within running distance of the sea, is in fact an ex-orphanage, bought by Laura (Belén Rueda) and her husband, Carlos (Fernando Cayo). Their plan is to restore it to its former glory, providing a haven for disabled children—and a home for their own son, Simón (Roger Príncipe), who does not know that he is both adopted and H.I.V.-positive. The unsettling thing is that Laura was raised in this same orphanage, before it closed down; at the start of the film, we see her as a child in its gardens, under a rain of thistle-down, deep in a game of Grandmother's footsteps. Why she should want to embark on such a project—whether she has exorcistic urges or is merely repaying a debt—is never clarified, and, as for the question of whether she would be judged fit to run an orphanage, it is barely

raised. A scary movie, however, is meant to be infested with implausibilities, and what counts is whether we allow them to nip and needle us throughout or whether, as happens here, we learn to live with them, and even, perhaps, to relish their powers of suggestion. Is it the case, for instance, that Laura could not wait to re-



Belén Rueda as the mother in a Spanish horror story.

visit her old haunts, or could it be that, like the planet to which Ripley returns in "Aliens," the place was waiting for her?

The house in Bayona's film certainly makes all the right noises: creaks, moans, unheralded door slams—the full pano-

ply of orchestrated dread. But who are the ghosts, if any, and what is their complaint? Simón, like most fanciful children, claims the companionship of invisible friends, and those absent figures grow every bit as present, and as pressing, as any of the living characters. Sometimes this is achieved through pure composition; down at the seashore, the boy is seen inside a cave, talking casually to someone just out of sight, obscured by a jutting wall of rock. His mother finds nobody there when she looks, of course, though she does find footmarks in the sand. This imprint of the spectral leads to a superb sequence at a children's party, back at the orphanage, where the young guests wear masks.

One of them, approached by Laura, turns nasty on her, blood is spilled, and the action quickens into panic. Simón gets lost, his parents race down to the beach once more, and the camerawork, hitherto as calm as a pool, is reduced to handheld jolts.

You may be surprised to find "The Orphanage" becoming a missing-persons investigation, until you realize that what concerns Bayona is not a police procedural—the cops hardly intrude on the movie, and one thoughtful sniffer dog could have cracked the plot before it began—but a meditation on what it means to go astray. Simón is missing, presumed dead, although his mother fiercely believes otherwise, whereas someone like Tomás—his closest imaginary friend—is missing from view but presumed in some mysterious way to be alive. Moreover, the missing need not be the sponsors of terror; many children's games, for example, depend on the secretive pleasure of vanishing, and "The Orphanage" is constructed like a long, intricate session of hide-and-seek, littered with tactile clues—a doorknob, a rag doll, an ice-cream wrapper, and a trail of seashells, like the pebbles and scraps of bread that Hansel and Gretel, already fearing their own disappearance, cunningly left in their wake.

Once Simón has been gone for half a year, and common sense proposes that he will not be seen again, his mother turns, more in determination than in despair, to

FRANK STOCKTON

those who are gifted with a sense of the uncommon. A team of paranormal inquirers comes to the orphanage, led by a figure clad in black, as slender as a child's stick drawing, and as recognizable, even from behind, as anyone in cinema. Indeed, once she turns around, the eyes and mouth (still deep and wide, however drawn the skin) tug us back inescapably to what was, in its time, the most famous face in the world. In short, Géraldine Chaplin is still a Chaplin, and thus she arrives at this movie ready-haunted by the past. She plays a medium called Aurora, and the entire film revolves around a séance, conducted not with crystal spheres and levitating tables but with the trappings of the modern spiritualist—oscilloscopes, CCTV, and, best of all, the green, flaring hues of a night-vision display. Used to spooky effect by the goggled villain in “The Silence of the Lambs,” this becomes more daunting still under Bayona's guidance. I was much taken—or, rather, mercilessly freaked out—by the way in which Aurora's pupils gleam hotly in the jungle-colored darkness, like those of a nocturnal leopard, caught by a naturalist's camera as it slinks to a watering hole.

One great virtue of “The Orphanage” is its surfeit of women. We have just crawled to the end of a lopsided year in which many of the most popular movies, as well as those which are now straightening their ties and preparing for the awards season, suffered a kind of female elision. I thought Kelly Macdonald worked hard, and stirringly, to fight her corner in “No Country for Old Men,” but in the end the movie found

too little time for her, and, as for “American Gangster” and “There Will Be Blood,” you would struggle to remember a single female face amid the tough guys. The most prominent woman was Katherine Heigl, round-bellied from her drunken rumpus in “Knocked Up,” a film that under the cover of its filthy patter marked a dismal retreat, cranking back the cause of women—not so much their social or sexual status as their *raison d'être*—to a stage so primitive that Hollywood sought to outgrow it decades ago. Carole Lombard would have taken one sip of a film like that and tipped it down the sink.

“The Orphanage” will change nothing, but its casting choices span a cheering range. Films that attack our nerves tend to rely on nubility, providing sacrificial flesh even when there are no vampires on set, but Bayona bucks the habit. The women here are not on show, being far too busy mapping the emotional ground. Belén Rueda is in her early forties, majestic but dressed down for the leading role, with an air of bruised ripeness. In real life, she lost a child to heart disease, which may account for the gravity with which she shoulders the on-screen task of *mater dolorosa*. Then, we get Chaplin's Aurora, Mabel Rivera as a police psychologist of tender but not inexhaustible patience, and Montserrat Carulla as the aging, thick-spectacled Benigna—a social worker, she claims, though since when did social workers return at night to make hammering sounds in your garden shed? In an Almodóvar picture, Carulla would offer dithering comic relief, but here she gets to deliver the two most disabling shocks in the

movie, one on the heels of the other. This is a country for old women.

The confounding thing is that, although those moments caused me to react as if someone had wired my seat to a car battery, the lasting impression of “The Orphanage” is not one of fright. Instead, you exit the cinema in a fever of melancholia, wondering how long it will take you to shed the sensation of alarm. The film is less of a shocker than an adventure in anxiety, testing and twisting some of the classic studies in infantile curiosity. We see Simón reading “Peter Pan,” but when he talks about not growing old he doesn't mean a divine, Edwardian promise of perpetual childhood. He means dying. To him, a lost boy is just another way of saying “ghost.” “If Peter Pan came to get me,” he asks his mother, as if she were Wendy, “would you come to Neverland to find me?” That makes it sound like an abduction. “The Orphanage” is more benign than cynical, in that it takes the love of mother and child to be the magnetic north of all human relations, yet it also peels away the innocence from its portrait of youth, brushing off the this-tledown and replacing it with dank cellars, slapped cheeks, and a badly stitched sack over the head. The opening session of Grandmother's footsteps is mirrored by another one at the close, with slightly altered rules: how would you care to play, for instance, if the hand reaching out toward you, at your back, did not belong to the living? I wish I didn't believe such nonsense, but for a hundred minutes I found I had no choice. In the words of Aurora, “Seeing is not believing. It's the other way round.” ♦

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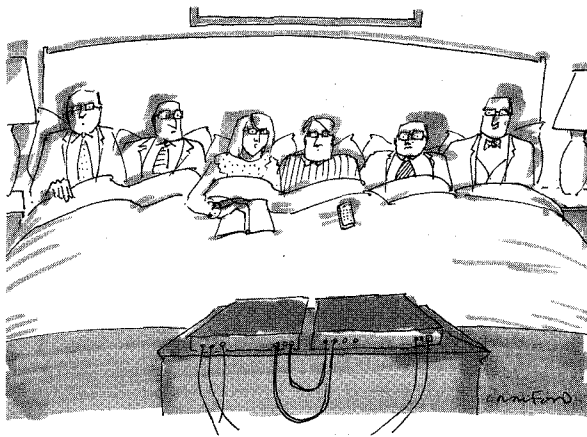
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CARTOON CAPTION CONTEST

Each week, we provide a cartoon in need of a caption. You, the reader, submit a caption, we choose three finalists, and you vote for your favorite. Caption submissions for this week's cartoon, by Leo Cullum, must be received by Sunday, January 13th. Finalists in the December 24th & 31st contest appear below; go online to vote. We will announce the winner, along with the finalists in this week's contest, in the January 28th issue. The winner will be given a signed print of the cartoon. Any U.S. resident age eighteen or over can enter or vote. To do so, and to read the complete rules, visit www.newyorker.com/captioncontest.

THE WINNING CAPTION



"I liked it better when we just had your people call my people."
John Late, Satellite Beach, Fla.



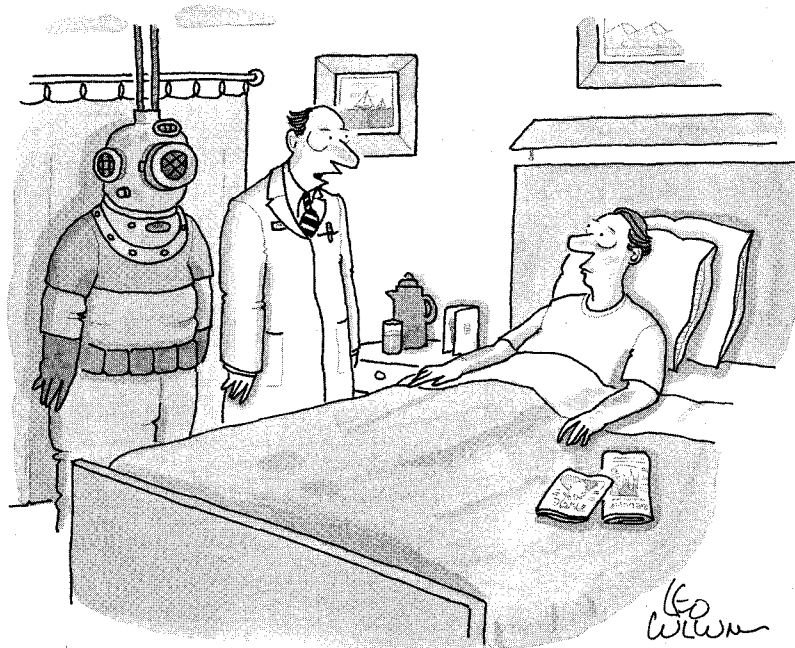
THE FINALISTS

"I put some beer on the hook. I figure if that's what got him into this mess it should be able to get him out."
Kea Wheeler, Westland, Mich.

"Ice fishing and skydiving—who says they don't go together?"
Michael Robinson, Riverton, N.J.

"He's got a new fish-whispering technique."
Joelle Santucci, Portsmouth, R.I.

THIS WEEK'S CONTEST



*B*ROADWAY TO CANAL, THEN HEAD WEST.



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